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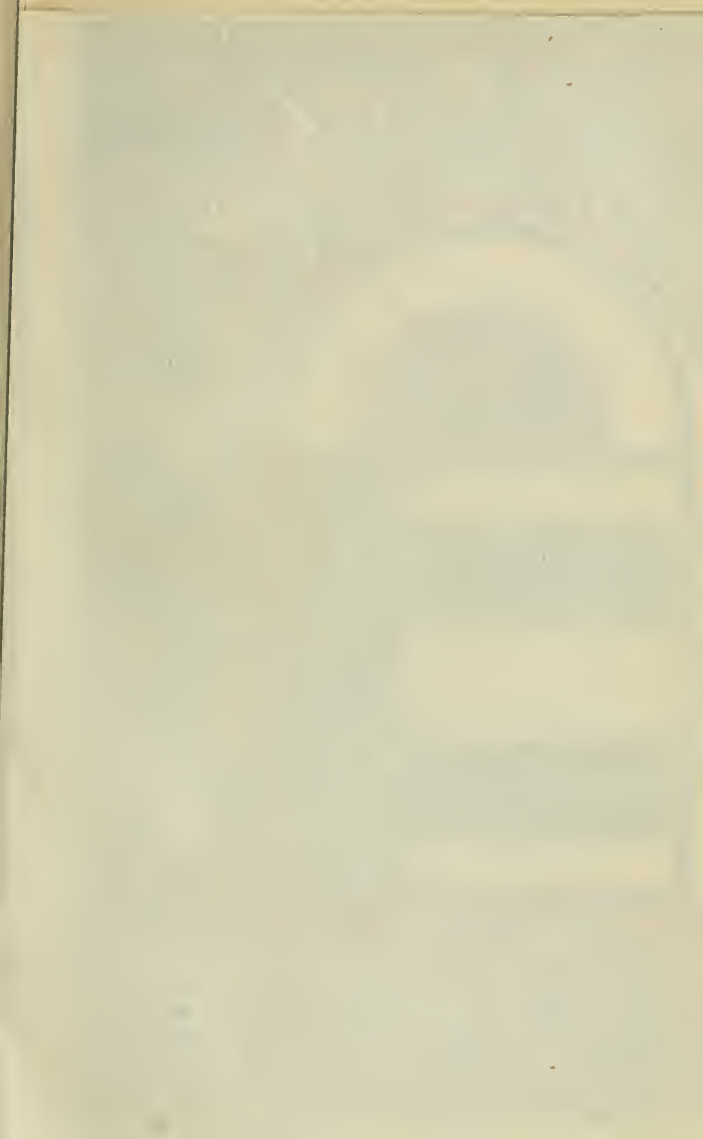
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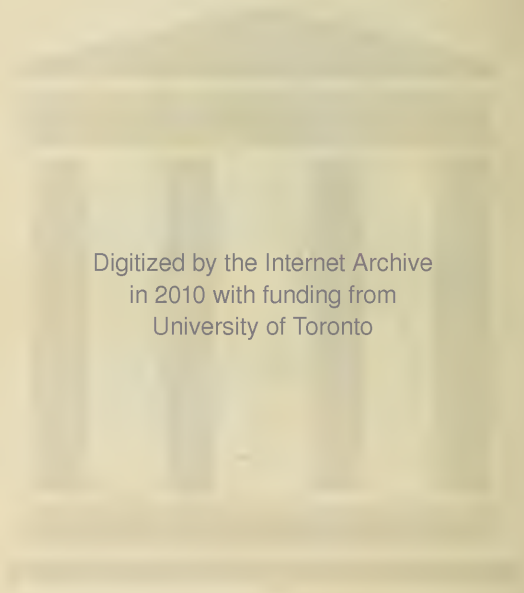
LIVES OF THE BRITISH POETS.

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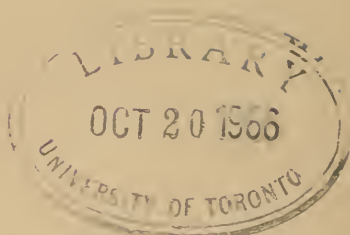
LIVES
OF
THE BRITISH POETS:

WITH SPECIMENS OF THEIR WRITINGS.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO.

1873.



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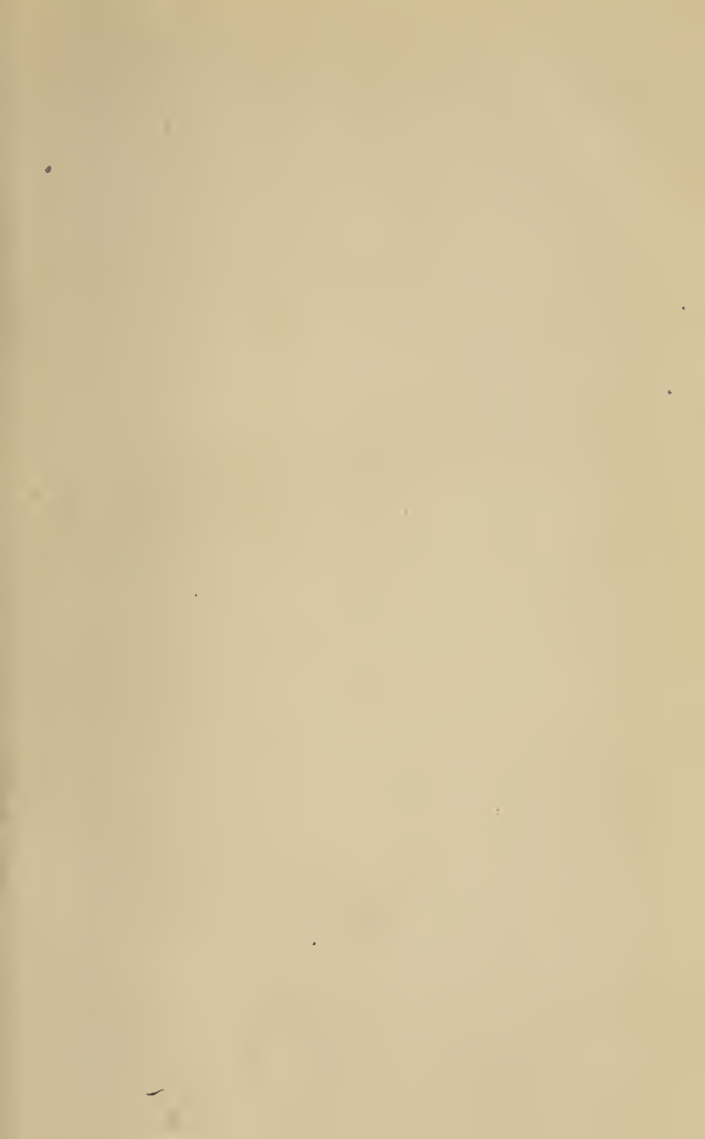
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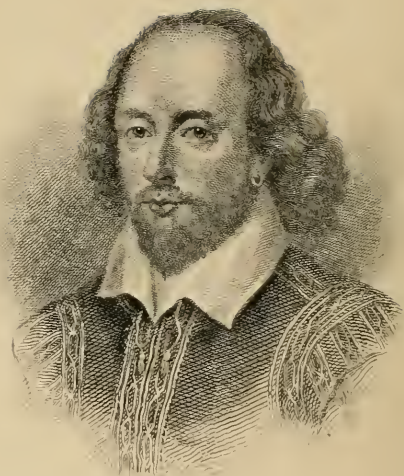
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William Shakspeare

SHAKESPEARE.

A MAN who held no higher rank than glover, a simple villager, with a plain yeoman name,—John Shakespeare,—had so much of intrinsic worth and attraction as to gain the heart and hand of Mary Arden, daughter to a man of good landed estate and ancient family, who was grand-nephew to a Sir John Arden, esquire of the body to Henry VII. Something originally and innately fine about these Shakespeares ! The marriage may be believed to have taken place somewhere in 1557 ; and Joan, the first child, was baptized in the church of Stratford-upon-Avon, on the 15th September 1558. A sweet English village, this Stratford ! seated on the edge of a silvery river, green with turfy banks and woody slopes, picturesque with cottage houses and cottage gardens ; crowned with a village church, ivy-clad, surrounded by moss-grown graves, approached by a lime-tree avenue, and its slender spire tapering towards heaven. In this same pleasant village John Shakespeare bought him two houses, one of which, in Henley Street, he made his residence, and brought home thither his wife. A homely tenement, one storey high, few rooms on a floor, plastered walls and beamed roof ; but in an upper chamber of this small house, Mary Arden Shakespeare gave birth to two daughters, (Joan and Margaret, both of whom died in infancy,) and then to a son. The faint first cry of her new-born boy gave but the token of joy common to all happy mothers that her babe lived, and might still live to bless her in his future life. She could then have had no

thrill of consciousness as to what would be to the world the hereafter utterances of him who now drew his first breath. Could she at that moment have beheld in beatific prevision the immortal destiny awaiting her child, no dreams vouchsafed to mortal travail-worn woman might equal hers. At the font he received the name of William, being christened on the 26th April 1564; and as it was then the custom to have infants baptized at an early period, there is great probability that the day of his birth was the 23d, St George's Day, the festival of the Patron Saint of England. His parents had to tremble for his life when he was no more than two months old; for the plague broke out at Stratford, raging there with fatal effect from June to December, and carrying off more than a seventh part of the population, calculated to have been about fourteen hundred inhabitants. But the baby Shakespeare escaped; and the world, with his father and mother, had cause to bless God and rejoice. Three months after his little son had completed his first year, John Shakespeare was elected one of the fourteen aldermen of his native village town; and he gradually advanced in rank and municipal importance, until he received the highest distinction in the power of his fellow-townsmen to bestow—being elected Bailiff of Stratford-upon-Avon in 1568. He was thus, *ex officio*, a magistrate. When William was two years old he had a brother born, Gilbert, baptized 13th October 1566; and by the time he reached the age of five years, he had a sister born, Joan, baptized 15th April 1569. She had the same name given to her as her parents' first-born; and this was probably owing to the fact of there being an Aunt Joan, who, in all likelihood, stood godmother on both occasions. This "Aunt Joan" was sister to the mother, Mary (Arden) Shakespeare, and had married Edward Lambert.

During the year 1569 there were theatrical performances by "The Queen's Players," in Stratford-upon-Avon; and perhaps "Aunt Joan" may have taken the little five-year-

old fellow for a treat to the play. Certain it is, that in the following twelvemonth, John Shakespeare became possessed of a field called "Ingon Meadow;" and here doubtless little William ran about to gather "daisies pied and violets blue," —a "boy pursuing summer butterflies." Next year he had another sister born, Anne, baptized 28th September 1571; and now probably commenced his schoolboy time, when, "with satchel and shining morning face," he sallied forth, even then, perchance, marking some others his companions "creeping, like snail, unwillingly to school;" for we cannot fancy *him* averse from his book. The masters of the Free Grammar-School about that period were, successively, Walter Roche, Thomas Hunt, and Thomas Jenkins; and the latter name irresistibly suggests that he was the prototype of the Welsh parson, Sir Hugh Evans: while we behold, as a picture-verity, Mary (Arden) Shakespeare leading her young son by the hand through Stratford streets, as Mrs Page leads his little namesake, William, through Windsor streets, till they meet with the schoolmaster, who is to "ask him some questions in his accidence." Then we see William bid to hold up his head, answer his master, and be not afraid. We see the boyish sunny eye glance up, look in the old man's face, take minute gauge of its every peculiarity, speak with a roguish affectation of demureness, and be all the while engaged in half-unconsciously registering present characteristic items for future delineation.

In 1573, when William was nine years old, his brother Richard was born, being baptized March 11th; and as John Shakespeare's family increased, so did his worldly prosperity; for in the following year he purchased of Edmund and Emma Hall two freehold houses, with gardens and orchards, in Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, for the sum of £40, equal to £200 of our present money. But after this period, his circumstances gradually declined during the next three years, until, in 1578, at a Borough-hall meeting, he was permitted to pay but 3s. 4d., as his share of a levied contribu-

tion. He also mortgaged some property belonging to his wife by inheritance,—a small estate called Asbyes,—and being unable to afford poor-rates, was left untaxed. In 1580 the youngest son, Edmund, was born, and baptized May 3d; while William had attained the age of sixteen years. Meantime there were not wanting events that may have helped to foster in the youth the poetic and dramatic bias of his genius. In 1575, Queen Elizabeth was entertained by the Earl of Leicester at Kenilworth Castle, where masques, pageants, and entertainments of the most gorgeous description were enacted for her Majesty's delectation; and it is by no means unlikely that the lad of eleven years old, with heart and brain on fire with accounts of what was in prospect at a place only fourteen miles off, found means to get over there to witness these princely shows. Besides this, there were occasional theatrical performances at Stratford-upon-Avon itself, by eminent travelling companies of actors from the metropolis; and many of these actors were natives of William's own birthplace and its neighbourhood. The names of Burbage, Slye, Heminge, Tooley, and Greene—all players afterwards connected with Shakespeare's dramatic career—are those of men more or less owing their origin to the county of Warwickshire, and very probably were objects of boyish admiration to the Stratford stripling, who would be sure to find means of making acquaintance with them.

This taste for theatricals and the society of actors may have been indulgences snatched between whiles, during holiday visits to his native place; for we have never been able to divest ourselves of the idea that Shakespeare *may* have had a portion of college education during the three years when he was fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen years of age. Although John Shakespeare's income was at that time peculiarly restricted yet it was not impossible that William may have been a scholar upon the foundation at one of the universities, a sizer or servitor; in which case, his collegiateship would have been no expense to his father. We have always fan-

cied that it was during one of these joyous summer holidays at his Stratford home, that, strolling through the pleasant lanes of Shuttery, a young fellow of eighteen, his eye first encountered the sweet face and débonnaire figure of Anne Hathaway, then in the full bloom of womanhood, and of an age most likely to captivate the imagination of a lad-lover—buxom five-and-twenty.—No surer enslaver of an imagination of eighteen, glowing with ideals of womanly perfection, than richly-gifted, accomplished, femininely-crowned five-and-twenty! In the girl of fifteen or sixteen, the youth sees but timidity, insipidity, immaturity; but in womanly five-and-twenty he beholds a something to worship, to idolise, to inspire him with all lofty aspirations, to emulate him to highest endeavour. His own diffidence feels assured in the contemplation of her supremacy; and his own sense of deficiency takes pride in and reposes on her entire excellence. We can believe that Shakespeare, at eighteen, beheld in Anne Hathaway, at five-and-twenty, the breathing embodiment of all that his young poet-brain had conceived prophetically possible in a Helena, a Rosalind, an Imogen; and to make her his own became the scope of his ambition. Shakespeare a suitor, a pleader, a lover; with his burning words, his ardour, his irresistible impetuosity, his intensity, his vital eloquence, his witchery of playfulness, his vivacity, his power of persuasion! Like his own Master Fenton, “he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May: he will carry’t! he will carry’t!”

The plain prose of facts and events gives ample evidence how Shakespeare wooed and won. In 1582, a “preliminary bond” to the solemnisation of matrimony between William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway was dated November 28th; and on May 26th of the following year their first child, Susannah, was baptized. It behoved the nineteen-year-old father to bethink of some means of supporting his wife and child; and it is probably at this period that Shakespeare found employment as a teacher at the grammar-school, (may-

hap he was usher, under his old master, Thomas Jenkins,) according to some traditions ; or as a lawyer's clerk, according to the conjecture of those who wish to prove that he thus acquired his remarkable amount of legal knowledge. But the fact that there was a Thomas Greene, who acted as clerk of the corporation in Shakespeare's native town, who was son to an attorney there, and who wrote once (in a letter still extant) of the poet, as "my cosen Shakespeare," may suffice to account for the latter's familiar acquaintance with law terms and legal particulars. Not only did Thomas Greene the younger thus claim cousinship with William Shakespeare, but the burial of Thomas Greene the elder was recorded in the parish register under these terms :—"Thomas Greene, *alias* Shakespeare, March 6, 1590 ;" and this gives rise to the belief that there must have been some very strong bond of intimacy between the two families ; so that it leads to the inevitable conviction that Shakespeare must have spent many an hour in the Greens' office, where such a mind as his would gather stores of professional knowledge while seeming merely employed in passing a leisure social hour. Whether or not Shakespeare did actually receive emolument from teaching in a school, or working in a lawyer's office, it is pleasant to fancy him employed in either or both honourable occupations, to earn bread for those who were dependent on his exertions, until the following year, 1585 ; when the birth of two more children—his twin boy and girl, Hamnet and Judith, baptized February 2d—proved that his then sources of revenue were insufficient to maintain his increasing family.

Here, be it incidentally recorded, was the time of the imputed deer-stealing prank in Sir Thomas Lucy's grounds of Charlccote ; and here also was the time when John Shakespeare ceased to be an alderman. His father's impoverished circumstances, his own inadequate gains, the decided bent of his tastes and talents, together with the instances of his theatrical friends, naturally turned William Shakespeare's

thoughts towards the stage as a means of livelihood, and combined to urge him upon the course he pursued. He took the grand step of his life, and went up to London in 1586. Of the following years we possess no record; but we may feel sure that he spent them in qualifying himself for his chosen profession of actor, in preparing his own already-written plays for production, and in altering and adapting such dramas by others as were to be brought out at the play-house, of which he became part proprietor; for in 1589 his name appears as a sharer in the Blackfriars Theatre, occurring twelfth on the list of sixteen shareholders. From that period began his ever-augmenting prosperity of career, until it culminated in a never-dying glory achieved. Little more than a year had elapsed ere Shakespeare's powers as a dramatist were already laudatorily alluded to by Edmund Spenser, in his "Tears of the Muses;" that poem being first published in 1591. That he had attained a high position in public favour, was not only proved by the eulogium of friends, but by the detractions of envy and malice. An attack by Robert Greene, posthumously produced by Henry Chattle, (but subsequently apologised for in his "Kind-heart's Dream,") made its appearance in 1592. This year the plague visited London, and dramatic performances were suspended; therefore it may have been the occasion when Shakespeare took that journey to Italy, which some of his commentators have conjectured he did, judging from the intimate acquaintance he has shown in some of his plays with local Italian customs, circumstances, and peculiarities. In 1593, when he was twenty-nine years old, our poet first appeared in print. His "Venus and Adonis" was published under the author's direction, by a printer named Richard Field—said to have been a Stratford man; and the affectionate hold which his native town and its "old familiar faces" had upon Shakespeare during his metropolitan life, may be deduced from the fact that many of his village-neighbours' names figure in his productions; such, for instance, as Fluellen, Bardolph, Audrey; and more

especially Anne,—the name of one of his sisters, and his own wife's name,—which so well becomes the pretty yeoman's daughter of Windsor, "Sweet Anne Page." The first edition of "Lucrece," also brought out at Field's press, was the next publication, and was followed by Spenser's second tribute to Shakespeare in the poem of "Colin Cloute's come Home Again." In this same year, 1594, it has been supposed that Shakespeare's noble friend and patron, Lord Southampton, made him that munificent present of a thousand pounds.

The spring of the subsequent year probably saw the opening of the Globe Theatre on the Bankside. Its building had been commenced on the 22d December 1593, by the leader of the company of actors, Richard Burbage, and was now ready (1595) for giving performances, which usually commenced at three o'clock in the afternoon. It was a circular wooden edifice; and, being open to the air, this theatre served for summer representations; while the Play-sharers sent in a petition (Shakespeare's name fifth on the list) for leave to repair and enlarge their Blackfriars Theatre for winter performances. In the August of this year, 1596, domestic affliction fell on Shakespeare in his Stratford home; his son Hamnet's burial is registered as having taken place on the 11th of the month; and his parents were in such reduced circumstances that their poet-son found support for his own trouble from endeavouring to alleviate theirs. He set himself to aid in redeeming from mortgage his mother's paternally inherited estate of Asbyes; he applied for a grant of arms to his father; and had made purchase of a dwelling-house and garden at Stratford, called "New Place," (also, "The Great House,") to which he brought home his parents, and established them there under his own country roof. It appears that he had had a residence in London, which he always occupied while in the metropolis, since the year 1596; and a letter of an after date shows this residence to have been situated in Southwark.

The year 1598 witnessed the first acting of Ben Jonson's

comedy, "Every Man in his Humour," it is said, through Shakespeare's instrumentality; and we are unwilling to withhold credence from this tradition of Shakespeare's influence generously exerted on behalf of a brother dramatist. There is substantial evidence that on the 25th October 1598 a letter was addressed by a fellow-townsmen, one Richard Quiney, to Shakespeare, requesting the loan of £30; a sum sufficiently large to show that the poet was now in affluent circumstances, while the terms in which the request is couched manifest the entire faith the writer reposed in the willingness, as well as ability, of the man he addressed to grant what was asked. The original of this letter—the only one extant, addressed to Shakespeare—is preserved in the Shakespeare Museum at Stratford-upon-Avon.

Before 1601 no fewer than twenty-one of Shakespeare's plays had been performed on the stage,—namely, "Two Gentlemen of Verona;" "Love's Labour's Lost;" "Taming of the Shrew;" three parts of "Henry VI.;" "Titus Andronicus;" "Midsummer-Night's Dream;" "Hamlet;" "Richard II.;" "Richard III.;" two parts of "Henry IV.;" "Romeo and Juliet;" "King John;" "Henry V.;" "As You Like It;" "Merchant of Venice;" "All's Well that Ends Well;" "Much Ado about Nothing;" and "Merry Wives of Windsor;" while ten of them had found their way into print, in separate quarto form. These ten were, "Love's Labour's Lost;" "Richard II.;" "Richard III.;" "Romeo and Juliet;" two parts of "Henry IV.;" "Henry V.;" "Much Ado about Nothing;" "Midsummer-Night's Dream;" and "Merchant of Venice." To counterbalance his London triumphs, sorrow came to him at Stratford-upon-Avon this year. His father, John Shakespeare, died; and the burial was recorded as having taken place on the 8th September 1601. One of those incidents also occurred that seem to be of trivial consequence in themselves, yet leave significant trace to those who observe them in their correlative import. Thomas Whittington, an old shepherd, (possibly the proto-

type of Corin, "the *natural* philosopher,") long in the employ of Richard Hathaway, expired ; leaving in his will a bequest of forty shillings to the poor of Stratford, which sum he had placed in the hands of his old master's daughter, Anne Shakespeare. This money confided to the care of the poet's wife, speaks with a pleasantly strong effect, in evidence of her trust-inspiring, kindly, reliable nature ; and we feel grateful for this piece of mute testimony to the sterling moral qualities possessed by Shakespeare's Anne, as we are irresistibly impressed with the idea of her personal attractions from her boy-husband's winning and wearing her some twenty years before.

In 1602 there is record of a patent granted on the 17th May by James I. to William Shakespeare and his company of players, that they might perform at the Globe Theatre and elsewhere, (Shakespeare's name second on the list ;) and in the same year the now wealthy playwright bought 107 acres of land, adjoining his dwelling at Stratford, for £320. He also became owner of a copyhold tenement there ; and made an additional purchase of land for £60 in the following year. It was at this time that Mrs Alleyn (wife to Edward Alleyn, the actor, and founder of Dulwich College) wrote the letter before alluded to, proving the whereabouts of Shakespeare's residence when staying in the metropolis ; for she mentions to her husband having seen " Mr Shakespeare of the Globe " in *Southwark*.

1604 is the probable date of Shakespeare's retirement from the stage as an actor ; and the lack of his prudence and discretion in counsel was adverse to the company. His control and presence ceasing, the ill effects were felt ; but it is probable that at the age of forty, which he had now attained, Shakespeare felt that he had earned a right to enjoy that comparative leisure and withdrawal from the more active bustle of public life, which most men of ardent natures and imaginative temperaments feel creep over them as they advance in maturity. They have drunk to fulness of the wine

of life, its sparkle has been theirs unto dazzling ; they would fain taste a calmer and more moderate draught of excitement, savoured in peace and repose. Few have the wisdom to relinquish the cup when actually at their lips, and leave it for the quieter abstinence they instinctively begin to prefer : but Shakespeare was wiser, as well as more greatly gifted, than most men ; and he ordained his own life-scheme with no less judgment than he mapped out those of the drama-characters he created.

The next eight years were spent in various occupations, taking him now to Stratford-upon-Avon, now to London ; now investing £440 in the purchase of a lease of tithes in Stratford, 24th July 1605, (in the indenture of which transaction he figures as “ William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon, *gentleman* ;”) now receiving a fellow-actor’s (Augustine Phillips) bequest of a gold piece worth thirty shillings ; now superintending the first performance of new plays he had written since the commencement of the century ; (before 1606, “ Troilus and Cressida ;” “ Othello ;” “ Twelfth Night ;” “ Henry VIII. ;” “ Measure for Measure ;” “ Comedy of Errors ;” “ Lear ;” and “ Macbeth ” had appeared ;) now giving his daughter Susannah in marriage to Dr John Hall, on the 5th June 1607 ; now paying the last sad duties to his youngest brother, Edmund, who was buried on the 31st December at St Saviour’s, Southwark ; then being made a grandfather, by the birth of Susannah’s child, Elizabeth, baptized 21st February 1608 ; now piously receiving his mother’s latest breath, and seeing her remains consigned to the grave, 9th September, the same year ; now performing the part of good friend and neighbour, by standing godfather to a boy named William Walker, on the 16th October, in his native place ; now being the object of a letter from Lord Southampton, wherein the nobleman styles Shakespeare “ my especial friend ;” now planting a mulberry-tree in his Warwickshire garden, while his sonnets were being first printed, on the 20th May 1609. Then we find him engaged in instituting a legal process against John Ad-

denbrook, in the month of March 1610, for the recovery of a small debt; when, the debtor decamping, a writ was issued by the borough court against Thomas Horsley, who had become bail: all of which shows that the poet did not choose to be imposed upon. Then, in 1611, there was a fine levied on the 107 acres of arable land purchased by William Shakespeare in 1602; and his name stands on a list of donations, (dated 11th September 1611,) contributed by the townspeople of Stratford, for defraying the charge of prosecuting "a bill in Parliament for the better repair of highways," &c. And then, in 1612, we come to the probable period of his quitting London entirely, to take up his permanent residence at Stratford; thus fully carrying out his retirement from metropolitan excitement.

But not inertly did he pass his country existence. We find him to have been one of the plaintiffs in a Chancery suit concerning the lease of tithes bought in 1605; we learn that he purchased a house in Blackfriars for £140, on the 10th March 1613, possibly with some view of convenience to his friends and former fellow-actors; we discover that he was active in endeavouring to prevent the enclosure of commonland at his native Stratford; we even trace him as being once again in London, when Thomas Greene, clerk of the corporation, sent up to town on this same business, made a note, dated 17th November 1614, wherein he mentions going to see Shakespeare on his arriving there also. Other events, nearly concerning Shakespeare, mark these few years:—On the 4th February 1613, his brother Richard was buried; on the 29th June, of the same year, the Globe Theatre was burned down; and on the 9th July 1614, there was a calamity of the same nature—a fire—at Stratford-upon-Avon.

In 1615 there is no especial record; but during the past nine years had appeared "Antony and Cleopatra," "Pericles," "Winter's Tale," "Tempest," "Coriolanus," "Timon of Athens," "Julius Cæsar," and "Cymbeline."

In the very opening of the year 1616, Shakespeare seems

to have felt some premonitory symptoms of decay and dissolution, for on the 25th January he prepared his will. On the 10th February he married his daughter Judith to Thomas Quiney. And on the 25th March he executed his will. There is a legend that Ben Jonson and Drayton took a spring holiday, and paid Shakespeare a visit at his Stratford home ; while the hospitable reception he gave to them hastened his end :—if so, there is something not incongenial in the thought that one of his last acts was entertaining his friends and brother poets, and that his convivial, bounteous nature thus concluded. However this be, William Shakespeare expired 23d April 1616, (the fifty-second anniversary of his birth,) living evermore afterwards in the love and gratitude of those to whom he bequeathed his immortal thoughts. They are ours, as it were, by his own words :—

“ My spirit is thine, the better part of me.”

Not only did William Shakespeare give to the world grander intellectual brain-product than any human being that ever lived, but he passed through life with a harmonious propriety of circumstance and completeness of achievement allotted to few. Born in that lovely English village, bred in wholesome pursuits, physical and intellectual, dwelling amid rural sights and influences during childhood, and transplanted to an urban atmosphere of refinement and accomplishment in London when just of age to receive most advantageously this crowning polish, the natural poet became the consummate poet.

He retained an affectionate regard for home ties amid the fascinations of town attachments ; he fulfilled his duties of son, brother, husband, and father, with consistency and truth ; he acquired public favour ; he won the love of brother-poets and brother-actors ; he secured the admiring esteem and friendship of distinguished noblemen, (counting Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton ; William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke ; and Philip, Earl of Montgomery, among

his associates and intimates ;) and he gained the favour and gracious approbation of both sovereigns (Elizabeth and James I.) who successively occupied the English throne during his lifetime. He was held in so high veneration by his own fellow-townsmen, that they laid his honoured bones close to the very communion-rails of their church, and erected his monumental effigy within the walls of their chancel; loved as a friend and genial companion by them when alive, revered as an ornament to their community in his memory after death.

We cannot but believe that this monumental effigy gives us the best transcript of his appearance during the last years of his life, when in ease and retirement; as the portraits of Martin Droeshout, prefixed to the first collected edition of his works in 1623, most likely affords the truest representation of his appearance while in active public metropolitan life. There is a bland fulness of repose in the monumental face and figure, and a compact, energetic, purposeful look about the Droeshout portrait, that seem severally and satisfactorily characteristic of the man at these different periods of his life. Of his person we have these reliable traces; while of his manner we possess certain less direct, but hardly less pertinent vestiges. We may gather from Fuller's illustrative words, and from Ben Jonson's hearty expressions, how Shakespeare looked moved, and spoke. We may perceive from Beaumont's lines * relative to the Mermaid Tavern, how Shakespeare (one of its chief members) contributed his share to social vivacity. Fuller speaks of the "wit-combats" at the jovial meetings there, and says of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson:—"Which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon, and an English man-of-war: Master Jonson, like the former,

* "What things have we seen

Done at the Mermaid! heard words that have been
 So nimble, and so full of subtle flamo,
 As if that every one from whom they came
 Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest."

was built far higher in learning ; solid, but slow in his performances : Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention." Ben Jonson's testimony is even still more fervent ; and though not more graphic, is yet more personally descriptive. There is a cordial warmth in the words that goes to the heart as we read them. He says :—"I loved the man, and do honour his memory (on this side idolatry) as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature ; had an excellent fancy, brave notions, and gentle expressions, wherein he flowed with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped." Stopped ! Shakespeare *stopped* ! ! But what a picture have we here of the poet's plenary and potential out-pour of idea and utterance ! We can never be too grateful to Ben Jonson for penning these few lines, containing so genuine an epitome of Shakespeare's mode of talking.

With respect to Shakespeare's acting, there can be little doubt that it was perfection in its way ; and Chettle, a contemporary, bore witness that he was "excellent in the quality he professes." His own advice to the players ("Hamlet," iii. 2) shows thorough knowledge and judgment, with practical discrimination. Such capacity to perceive and instruct implies power to fulfil. The fact of his enacting that part of the Ghost, in "Hamlet," is proof positive that he must have had pre-eminent gifts in impersonation ; for would the author of that disembodied creation have intrusted its presentment to any one disqualified from rendering it competently, impressively, thrillingly, to an audience gazing breathless on that most awful spiritual presence ? That he chose to play the comparatively insignificant part of the faithful old serving-man in "As You Like It," is but another point in confirmation that he chose to have a beautiful subordinate character well filled, while he himself could well fill it ; and we feel the force of Coleridge's earnest assertion :—"I am certain

that Shakespeare was greater as Adam in 'As You Like It,' than Burbage as Hamlet or Richard III."

With regard to Shakespeare's mode of composition, we have always believed that he constructed many of his greatest things at moments when he was not seated formally with pen, ink, and paper before him, but abroad in the open air, walking, on horseback, alone, or in company, as the case might be. With his richly capacious mind, his fertile imagination, his ever-flowing fancy, and faculty of observation ever open to impression, he must have been perpetually conceiving and shaping those grand images which took immortally-embodied form when he came to pen them down. The evidence contained in those words that occur in the Address prefixed to the folio of 1623, by his first editors, and former fellow-actors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, affords valuable indication of Shakespeare's power in composition:—"His mind and hand went together; and what he thought he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

Of his actual writing, we have a cherished idea that he himself gives indication of his own precise condition when in the act of putting his thoughts on paper, where he makes Hamlet say—

"In my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep. . . .
Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play;—I sat me down," &c.

The eager, half-disjointed, half-hurried lines, so expressive of an ardour tremulous with its desirous haste, strike us with peculiar force of probable meaning in delineating the poet's own mode of writing.

In all that relates to him, Shakespeare is interesting: in what he said, looked, lived, a source of vivid interest: in what he thought, wrote, and gave the world, a source of interest to the world's ends, and to the end of the world.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SHAKESPEARE

DEATH.

To be, or not to be, that is the question :
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take up arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing, end them?—To die—to sleep—
No more?—and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to:—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished ! To die,—to sleep ;—
To sleep ! perchance to dream ; ay, there's the rub ;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause :—there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life :
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin ? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,—
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns,—puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear the ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of ?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all ;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought ;
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

THE FAVOUR OF PRINCES.

FAREWELL, a long farewell, to all my greatness !
This is the state of man : To-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope ; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him :
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And,—when he thinks, good, easy man, full surely

His greatness is a-ripening,—nips his root,
 And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,
 Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
 These many summers in a sea of glory;
 But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride
 At length broke under me; and now has left me,
 Weary, and old with service, to the mercy
 Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.
 Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!
 I feel my heart new open'd. Oh, how wretched
 Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!
 There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
 That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
 More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
 And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer—
 Never to hope again.

THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN.

ALL the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players:
 They have their exits and their entrances;
 And one man in his time plays many parts,
 His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
 And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
 Sighing like furnace, with a woful ballad
 Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then the soldier,
 Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard;
 Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
 Seeking the bubble reputation
 Even at the cannon's mouth. And then the justice:
 In fair round belly, with good capon lined,
 With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws and modern instances;
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon;
 With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side;
 His youthful hose well saved, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shanks; and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second childishness, and mere oblivion;
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

FLATTERY AND FRIENDSHIP.

EVERY one that flatters thee
 Is no friend in misery:

Words are easy like the wind ;
 Faithful friends 'tis hard to find ;
 Every man will be thy friend,
 While thou hast wherewith to spend.
 But if store of crowns be scant,
 No man will supply thy want.
 If that one be prodigal,
 Bountiful they will him call :
 If he be addict to vice,
 Quickly him they will entice.
 But if Fortune once do frown,
 Then farewell his great renown ;
 They that fawn'd on him before,
 Use his company no more.
 He that is thy friend indeed,
 He will keep thee in thy need.
 If thou sorrow, he will weep ;
 If thou wake, he cannot sleep.
 Thus of every grief in heart,
 He with thee doth bear a part.
 These are certain signs to know
 Faithful friend from flattering foe.

LIFE.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
 Creeps in this petty space from day to day,
 To the last syllable of recorded time ;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !
 Life's but a walking shadow ; a poor player,
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
 And then is heard no more ; it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.

USEFULNESS.

HEAVEN doth with us as we with torches do,
 Not light them for ourselves ; for if our virtues
 Did not go forth of us, 'twere all alike
 As if we had them not. Spirits are not finely touch'd,
 But to fine issues : nor Nature never lends
 The smallest scruple of her excellence,
 But like a thrifty goddess she determines
 Herself the glory of a creator,—
 Both thanks and use.

HONEY-BEES.

WHILE that the arm'd head doth fight abroad,
 The advisèd head defends itself at home :
 For government, through high, and low, and lower,
 Put into parts, doth keep with one concert,
 Congreeing in a full and natural close,
 Like music. Therefore doth Heaven divide
 The state of man in divers functions,
 Setting endeavour in continual motion ;
 To which is fix'd, as an aim or butt,
 Obedience : for so work the honey-bees ;
 Creatures that, by a rule in nature, teach
 The act of order to a peopled kingdom.
 They have a king, and officers of sorts :
 Where some, like magistrates, correct at home,
 Others, like merchants, venture trade abroad ;
 Others, like soldiers, arm'd in their stings,
 Make boot upon the summer's velvet buds ;
 Which pillage they with merry march bring home
 To the tent-royal of their emperor,
 Who, busied in his majesty, surveys
 The singing masons building roofs of gold ;
 The civil citizens kneading up the honey ;
 The poor mechanic porters crowding in
 Their heavy burdens at his narrow gate ;
 The sad-eyed justice, with his surly hum
 Delivering o'er to executioners pale
 The lazy yawning drone.

MERCY.

THE quality of mercy is not strained ;
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
 Upon the place beneath : it is twice bless'd ;
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes :
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest ; it becomes
 The thronèd monarch better than his crown :
 His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
 The attribute to awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;
 But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
 It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
 It is an attribute to God himself ;
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's
 When mercy seasons justice.



Hutton

MILTON.

JOHN MILTON was born in Bread Street, in the city of London, on the 9th of December 1608. Almost nothing is known with certainty regarding the family to which he belonged. He says himself (*Defensio Secunda*) that he was come of an honourable race; and his earliest biographers, Aubrey, Wood, and Philips, more specifically state that he was descended from an ancient Oxfordshire family, one of whom, according to Philips, "having taken the wrong side in the contests between the Houses of York and Lancaster, was sequestered of all his estate but what he held by his wife." Whatever truth there may be in this tradition, the first Milton of whom we have any definite knowledge is the poet's grandfather, usually called John, but more probably Richard Milton, said to have been an under-ranger or keeper of the Forest of Shotover, near Holton, in Oxfordshire. He was a rigid Catholic, and, if the conjecture of Mr Hunter, the eminent antiquary, (*Vide Milton: A Sheaf of Gleanings*, 1850,) is correct, was twice fined in the reign of Elizabeth for non-attendance at the parish-church. By his marriage with a widow Jeffrey, he had a son named John, the father of the poet, who studied at Christ Church, Oxford, but who, abjuring Romish tenets at an early age, was, in consequence, disinherited by his offended parent. John thereupon betook himself to London towards the close of the sixteenth century, where he became a scrivener, (a sort of conveyancing lawyer,) and prospered so much in his profession, that, according to

Aubrey, he "got a plentiful estate by it." He was a man of fine tastes and accomplishments, and enjoyed no inconsiderable reputation as a musical composer several years before the poet was born. He is the author of several madrigals and other pieces, and of the two fine psalm-tunes, Norwich and York; "and so, apart from all that he has given us through his son, there yet rests in the air of Britain, capable of being set loose wherever church-bells send their chimes over English earth, or voices are raised in sacred concert round an English or Scottish fireside, some portion of the soul of that admirable man, and his love of sweet sounds," (Masson's *Milton*, vol. i., p. 38.) From him his son doubtless derived his deep love of music; but he appears to have also derived something still more precious—that incorruptible integrity of soul that has secured for him a reverence accorded to no other English poet. Milton, who was justly proud of such a parent, pronounces him *vir integerrimus*. His household was pervaded by a spirit of serious Puritan piety, untinged, however, by the slightest approach to moroseness or bigotry. The more than parental generosity which he exhibited in the education of his gifted son is a proof of the liberality of his ideas and culture. By his wife, Sarah Caston or Bradshaw, he had six children, three of whom (the first, fourth, and fifth) died in infancy. Of the survivors, a daughter, Anne, was the eldest; then came the poet; and after him Christopher, the youngest, born in 1615. Anne was married in 1624 to a Mr Edward Philips, who held a situation in the Crown Office in Chancery. Their son, also named Edward, was a pupil and biographer of the poet. Christopher became a lawyer, and "adhered, as the law taught him," (to use without endorsing the royalist language of Dr Johnson,) "to the king's party." Late in life, he rose to eminence, was knighted, and made a judge by King James VII.

Milton's childhood was passed in stirring and eventful times. The Scottish successor of Elizabeth,—obstinate, yet vacillating,—irascible, yet feeble,—pugnacious, yet cowardly,

—a sorry mixture of conceit, cunning, arrogance, and poltroonery, had quite alienated from him the lovers of both civil and religious liberty. The English parliament steadily resisted his extravagant pretensions to authority, doggedly disbelieving in “the right divine of kings to govern wrong,” while his peevish animosity towards the rising spirit of Puritanism (grounded on nothing better than his aversion to anybody but himself exercising the liberty of private judgment) had led him into a positively fanatical support of prelacy, the only effect of which was to exasperate and inflame the religious zeal of the Opposition. Mr Masson (*Life of Milton*, vol. i., pp. 45-47) groups together a variety of important occurrences that happened during the first twelve years of the poet’s life, such as the burning of Ariens at Smithfield and Burton-on-Trent; the rise of that baleful luminary, Villiers, Duke of Buckingham; the death of Shakespeare; the beheadal of the chivalrous Sir Walter Raleigh, (“to please the Spanish court,” as the people said;) the meeting of the famous Synod of Dort; and the angry grumblings of the nation at the reluctance of James to support his son-in-law, the Elector Palatine, chosen Emperor of Germany by the Protestant party,—a reluctance caused by a wish not to offend the Spanish monarch, whose daughter he was then anxious to secure for his son Charles. Some of these things, Mr Masson suggests, could hardly fail to be much talked of in so serious and intelligent a household as that of the elder Milton; hence we may in some measure realise what were the wider and more general influences that moved and directed the current of the poet’s early thoughts and feelings. He was a precocious child, or perhaps we should rather say that, being trained from his first years with “ceaseless diligence and care,” (*The Reason of Church Government*, Book II.,) his intellect had developed itself with proportionate rapidity. Anyhow, we are informed, on the authority of his brother Christopher, that he was a poet at the age of ten; but none of his childish verses have survived. His first in-

structor after his father was a Mr Thomas Young, a Scotchman, and a zealous Puritan, but also, as is quite evident from Milton's letters, a man of excellent scholarship and literary tastes. About 1620, he was sent by his father to St Paul's School, then one of the best classical seminaries in London. At this time the head master was Alexander Gill, "a noted Latinist, critic, and divine," who had moreover "such an excellent way of training up youth that none in his time went beyond it." "Notwithstanding," says Aubrey, "he had his moods and humours, as particularly his whipping fits." He had a son, also named Alexander, who was his assistant, and was in great repute among the boys for stylish scholarship. When Milton went to St Paul's, Gill, junr., was a young man of twenty-two or twenty-three; and one can easily imagine the reverence with which a studious and aspiring boy, still labouring under the difficulties of his imperfect knowledge, would look up to this "splendid maker of Greek and Latin verses." Gill, junr., was noted, besides, for a certain audacity of opinion in matters political, and a love of hot, contemptuous language towards people whom he disliked, that would naturally be attractive to lads only *beginning* to think, and particularly so to one who, in later years, startled all England, and even the scholastic magnates of the Continent, by the boldness of his theories, and the vulturine fierceness of his style. At all events, they were close companions. Writing to him from college, Milton speaks of his "almost constant conversations with him," (*Epist. Fam.* 3,) and of the great advantages he had derived from his society. And there can be no doubt that Gill, however rash, unwise, or violent, was well fitted for stimulating the literary ambition of a boy like John Milton. The boy used to send him from Cambridge specimens of his poetical compositions, partly for friendship's sake, and partly that he might receive the benefit of his "severe" and "candid" criticism. But Milton's most powerful stimulus was from within. Nature had given him the habits and cravings—and, we may add, the sufferings—

of a scholar. He says himself, in the *Defensio Secunda*—“My father destined me, while yet a little boy, for the study of humane letters, for which my appetite was so voracious, that, from the twelfth year of my age, I scarcely ever went from my lessons to bed before midnight; which, indeed, was the primary cause of injury to my eyes, to whose natural weakness there were also added frequent headaches.” His nephew Philips speaks of his “admirable success” at school; and from him also we learn that the midnight oil was consumed by the young student not only in the “exact perfecting of his school-exercises,” but in “voluntary improvements of his own choice.” Among these voluntary improvements we must include some acquaintance with the great names of English literature. This is usually inferred from the fact that the earliest extant poems of Milton,—viz., the paraphrases into English of Psalms cxiv. and cxxxvi., (both of which belong to the last year of his attendance at St Paul’s School,) contain, or are thought to contain, epithets and images taken from, or at least suggested by, Chaucer, Spenser, Sylvester, Drayton, Drummond, Fairfax, and Buchanan. It is not in the least unlikely that Milton had read these poets, and had appropriated such of their felicities of expression as he fancied, for he was the “prince of plagiarists;” but it would be better to infer Milton’s knowledge of English authors at this point of his life from *à priori* considerations than from the slender evidence furnished by these pieces. For a boy of fifteen, the poems are, if not wonderful, yet of much more than average excellence. Dr Johnson says, “They raise no great expectations.” But being little else than translations, poetical exercises, how could they? It appears to us that their spirit and versification are genuinely and even finely poetical. And that is the most that could be expected.

On the 12th of February 1624, Milton was admitted, at the age of sixteen, a lesser pensioner of Christ’s College, Cambridge. Here he resided for seven years. Of his academic

curriculum we know hardly anything. Mr Masson has indeed furnished us with a very elaborate delineation of the outward and general aspects presented by the university, together with some interesting sketches of the heads and tutors of the various colleges. From these we can form a tolerably correct notion of the common life and talk of the place; of the sort of people by whom the poet was surrounded; and even of the scholastic discipline that he underwent; but the rest is nearly a blank. The background is well filled in, the accessoriēs are all there, but the principal figure is wanting. Yet it may be doubted if even a contemporary of Milton's could have thrown much light on this period of his life. He was a laborious recluse, who cared very little for the society of other Cantabs, preferring to pursue in proud, if not contemptuous isolation, an independent course of study. After a four years' residence, he complains, in an epistle to Gill, of his want of genial companionship, and of the low intellectual status of the students. In his second year he quarrelled with his first tutor, Chappell, and was apparently rusticated. Dr Johnson is manifestly not displeased to think, though he says he is ashamed to relate, that the author of *Paradise Lost* "suffered the public indignity of corporal chastisement." This was probably a royalist scandal, originating in a malicious exaggeration of the fact,—viz., that Chappell had, in addition to harsh threats, offered some indignities to his pupil, to which the latter would not submit. Milton's rustication, if it even amounted to so much, extended only to a month or two. He did not lose a single term during his whole course. On his return he exchanged the tutorship of Chappell for that of a Mr Tovey. There is ground for believing that Milton was for some years unpopular in his college; the causes may be conjectured, but are not known. If he did feel contempt for the mass of his fellow-students, he was the last person in the world to conceal it; and a haughty, imperious, irreproachable scholar, visibly conscious of his own superior gifts, is the individual

of all others whom the careless mob of undergraduates most sincerely and emphatically abhor. Yet it is certain that this unpopularity must have ultimately disappeared before the recognition of his splendid powers and attainments. Philips distinctly affirms that "he was loved and admired by the whole university, particularly by the fellows and most ingenious persons of his house;" and this statement is confirmed by the more unimpeachable testimony of the poet himself, who twice refers to the subject in terms which show that probably no Cambridge student stood so high as himself in the respect and esteem of the university authorities. His departure was actually acknowledged by the fellows of Christ's College to be a public loss! Nevertheless it may be seriously doubted if there was much real warmth of feeling in the "esteem" of his learned superiors. At all events, it does not appear that the first scholar of the university was offered a fellowship, although it is just possible this may have resulted from his opinions in regard to subscription being already known. Milton himself, we know, never looked back to his residence at Cambridge with other feelings than those of positive dislike. He took, however, the usual degrees of B.A. (1628) and M.A. (1632.) In all his academic exercises, and in all his subsequent allusions to this period of his life, we find evidences that he had already turned his mind to the loftiest moral and literary meditations. There is no hesitancy or vacillation about his predilections. He does not dally even in jest with humble or unworthy topics. An austere scorn of all things frivolous, or mean, or base, marks every utterance. When the idea first steadily presented itself before him, that he too might become a poet, it was accompanied with this noble conviction, "that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem—that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honourablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the

experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy,' (*Apology for Smeectymnus*.) There is something sublime, too, in the unaffected rapture which the ancient sages excite in him. How genuinely he loves the "shady spaces of philosophy," the "divine volumes of Plato," and the "abstracted sublimities" of Knowledge and Virtue, to be found in their pages. We are reminded of those glorious lines in *Comus*—

"How charming is divine philosophy!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull fools suppose;
But musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns."

But it is not only in his studies that the Miltonic love of themes, lofty and pure, is visible. At Cambridge his poetic genius began to bear such fruit as England had rarely seen. Not to mention several minor pieces of remarkable beauty, it was there he composed, for Christmas 1629, his *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*—a poem which, for mingled majesty and beauty, has perhaps no equal among the higher kind of lyrics in the English language. There is a solemn richness of melody in the verse that is perfectly enchanting. Think of a youth of twenty-one penning lines like these—

"Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the bass of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your nine-fold harmony
Make up full concert to the angelic symphony.

"For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch the age of gold:
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould,
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

"The oracles are dumb,
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving:
 Apollo from his shrine
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
 No nightly trance or breathèd spell
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

"The lonely mountains o'er,
 And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
 From haunted spring and dale,
 Edgèd with poplar pale,
 The parting genius is with sighing sent;
 With flower-inwoven tresses torn,
 The nymphs in twilight-shade of tangled thickets mourn."

Milton at college was famed for his beauty; he was nicknamed "the lady of Christ's;" not, however, it may be presumed, because of anything feminine in his manner or appearance, but rather on account of "that exceeding fairness of complexion" noted by Aubrey. Indeed, we learn from Wood that he had a manly, resolute, and even dauntless gait; and the poet himself, who is never loath to speak in his own praise when occasion requires, tells us (*Defensio Secunda*) he reckoned himself so good a swordsman, that he was not in the least afraid of anybody, however robust! He was rather under the middle stature, of an oval countenance, with auburn hair, and dark gray eyes.

On leaving the university, Milton went to reside with his father, who had now retired from business, and was living at Horton in Buckinghamshire. His friends appear to have been surprised that he did not immediately choose a profession. To them it seemed that he was wasting his energies and opportunities. Even before he left Cambridge, one, at least, had ventured to remonstrate with him on his excessive love of study and lettered ease. We possess the poet's reply, in which he does not deny that he takes an "endless delight" in "speculation," but vindicates his course in his invariably-exalted style. He confesses that he is not anxious "to press

forward as soon as many do," but "keeps off with a sacred reverence and religious advisement—not taking thought of being late, so it gives advantage to be more fit; for those that were latest lost nothing when the master of the vineyard came to give each one his hire." His father had meant him for the Church, and was naturally enough somewhat disappointed that so brilliant a son should forego his legitimate prospects of ecclesiastical celebrity. We cannot say what glowing dreams the old scrivener may have cherished; he had a right, however, to be enthusiastic in his hopes, which were destined to be more than fulfilled, although in a way that he probably never anticipated. That he remonstrated with Milton is clear from the Latin poem *Ad Patrem*; but his reason and affection were both too strong to allow him to force the inclinations of his son. The latter, in truth, was sternly set against becoming a priest. He tells us, (*The Reason of Church Government*,) "that he who would take orders must subscribe slave, and take an oath withal, which unless he took with a conscience that would retch, he must either straight perjure or split his faith,"—a statement the precise intent of which has been differently understood; but in any case it unmistakably evinces the vigour of his antipathy to the office of a clergyman in the Church of England; nor have we far to go to seek the cause of this antipathy.

The ruling spirit of the Church at this moment was William Laud, Bishop of London, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. Theologians are still divided in their opinions concerning this remarkable man; but those accustomed to look upon churchmen as they would upon plain un consecrated individuals, find it less difficult to agree. In the eyes of such he stands out as the most thoroughgoing, the most sincere, and the most tyrannical ritualist ever bred within the bosom of a Protestant Church. Not cruel or bloodthirsty by disposition, he was yet capable of the most cruel and atrocious acts—if necessary to the execution of his favourite policy. There was *then* no mercy in his nature. Of a small

and unphilosophical understanding, he found it easy to be convinced of the rectitude of his "plan" for the restoration of the Church to its true dignity, and piously enamoured of all his elaborately-contrived ceremonialism. Yet though his intellect was essentially paltry—and his *Diary* shows us that even his religion was half buried beneath the rubbish of imbecile superstitions—he was infinitely persistent, vigilant, and laborious. In his little soul there were no doubts, fears, vacillations; these were things he could not apprehend. If ever there was a man who had a "fixed idea," it was Laud. Hence the secret of his late but inevitable rise to power. He was long disliked, and by many detested,—not without reason, for he had sneaking ways about him, and used to play the spy on his opponents; but after 1622, when his intimacy with Buckingham commenced, his influence extended day by day, until, with the accession of Charles to the throne, (1625,) it became supreme. During the latter half, therefore, of Milton's residence at the university, he had abundant opportunities of observing the effect of Laud's influence on the Church, and thereby on the State; for at this period the affairs of the two were, from various causes, so intimately connected with each other as to be inseparable. He could not help seeing that it was absolutely triumphant in the councils of the king, and almost as much so within the Church itself—so far as preferments went; while at the same time it was embittering beyond measure the feelings of the nation. In this wretched state of things, what other course was open to Milton than that he took? "Perceiving," he says, (*The Reason of Church Government*), "what tyranny had invaded the Church, . . . I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking, bought and begun with servitude and forswearing." Little indeed recked the proud and free spirit of the youth who had hitherto passed his time in an "endless delight of speculation," of the plans for securing conformity of worship, the bowings and genuflexions, the wax-candles, green and

blue, the arrangement of altars, and all the other decorative paraphernalia, about which Laud was so pitifully zealous. Zeal for such things, and above all, persecution for nonconformity in such, could only excite disgust in one who was resolved to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free; and so "Church-outed by the prelates," Milton withdrew to serener meditations, amid the pleasant landscapes of Buckingham.

The next six or seven years of Milton's life were perhaps the happiest he ever enjoyed. His imagination was in the spring-time of its freshness and beauty, and at liberty to luxuriate among the wealth and variety of natural phenomena. "The outward shows of sky and earth" were ever before him; nor can we doubt that "impulses of deeper birth would come to him in solitude." The scenery round Horton—its bowery woodlands, its broad levels, its "glowing orchards," its rich meadows, and its murmuring rivulets, would

"sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination,"

and yield from day to day an exquisite delight. His intellect, too, was incessantly gathering strength not only from that active exercise of independent judgment on the events of his time to which Milton was irresistibly compelled, but also, and probably in a greater degree, to his continued and extended studies. The ancient literature and philosophy of Greece and Rome were again carefully perused. It is said that during this period he read all the Greek and Latin writers; and though the statement is unquestionably an exaggeration, it at least indicates the comprehensive nature of his work. His knowledge of Italian, begun at an earlier date, was now, it may be presumed, enlarged. In that tongue his favourite authors were Dante and Petrarch—partly, as he himself informs us, because of the purity of their genius; for this was a point on which Milton was nobly strict. Meanwhile his muse was not asleep. Immediately

after betaking himself to the country, he appears to have devoted himself to literary composition with singular ardour. In the fact that most of what are called his minor poems are believed to have been produced in the first two or three years of his residence at Horton, I think we can see the bright and vivid and generous ambition of the emancipated student. Not that Milton was anxious about obtaining a reputation, or that the compulsory labours of academic life were an irksome drudgery to him. Far from that. He had the true nature of a scholar ; his patience, firmness, tenacity, and love of rigorous vigils ; but still the sense of fresh life and power that his new freedom would give him must have acted as a spur to his poetical activity. *Comus, a Masque*, was produced in 1634, when the poet was in his twenty-sixth year, and was, as the title informs us, "presented at Ludlow Castle, before John, Earl of Bridgewater, then President of Wales." That nobleman had just entered on his viceregal office, and was dispensing a series of splendid hospitalities. Lawes, the eminent musician, was requested to furnish a musical entertainment ; a masque was suggested. Milton was a friend of Lawes, if not a pupil, (for we know that during his residence at Horton he occasionally went up to London to take lessons in music and mathematics,) and it is conjectured with extreme probability that he furnished the words of the masque at the request of the former. The circumstances that gave it birth are, however, though not uninteresting, matter of little moment ; the poem itself is the great thing. One hardly knows how to speak of it. It is well-nigh impossible to praise its golden lines in temperate words. We are hurried almost irresistibly into the language of rapture. The chastened splendour, the classic richness of its descriptions, have never been equalled. Every page displays the exuberance of a youthful but mighty imagination ; yet there is no trace of that mere riot of disordered fancy, that repulsive mixture of the sublime and the silly, that often marks the earlier manifestations of poetic genius. This is

owing not alone to the erudition or taste of Milton, his familiarity with and appreciation of the great masters of classic style, but also, and in a high degree, to that spirit of reverence and love of idealised morality which find their proper expression in a diction at once lofty and pure. The passage in which the brother of the lady sets forth the power and security of the virgin Chastity, is one of the finest things that even Milton ever wrote, and may be selected as an illustration of those qualities that more or less pervade the whole poem. The rich, sweet, copious harmony of the verse, which moves slowly, as if burdened with its fulness of music, is another element of fascination in *Comus*. It is well described in those lines in which the attendant spirit characterises the singing of the lady—

“A solemn breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distill'd perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was 'ware, and wish'd she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displac'd. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death!”

Probably of still earlier date than *Comus* are those twin poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, in which we seem to discern a love of natural imagery for its own sake, that free delight in the changing colours and sounds of earth and air, which in a youth is one of the surest signs of a genuinely poetical soul. *L'Allegro* (“The Cheerful Man”) instinctively seeks out and revels in the gladness and gaiety of nature. For him the lark startles the dappled dawn, chanticler crowes with lively din, huntsmen rouse the slumbering morn, the great sun ascends the sky in his flaming amber robes, the ploughman whistles and the milkmaid sings, the shepherds dance to the music of merry bells and jocund rebecks, the spicy nut-brown ale is quaffed, throngs of bold barons pass, and store of ladies whose bright eyes rain influence,—all such splendid pageantry as youthful poets dream, floats by For

him Jonson treads the stage with learned sock, and Shakespeare warbles his native wood-notes wild, and night, with soft Lydian airs married to immortal verse, laps him into golden slumbers! *Il Penseroso* ("The Pensive Man") loves glimmering bowers and shades; the melancholy music of the nightingale; the wandering moon high in the heavens; the slow, deep sound of the swinging curfew-bell; the mystic enchantments of midnight studies; a morn of wind, and cloud, and dim rains; lonely groves where the murmur of brooks and bees entice dewy-feathered sleep, and mysterious dreams wave their wings about his soul; the dim, religious light of cloisters; the solemn peal of the organ; the ecstasies of devotion; and an old age of wondrous lore, lifting his soul to something like prophetic strain. *Arcades*, a poem of the same sort as *Comus*, but much shorter, is described as *Part of an Entertainment Presented to the Countess-Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some Noble Persons of her Family*. It is conjectured to have been written about 1634. Milton did not write anything more of much consequence for the next three years or so. Was this because he was busy with his Italian and classic studies? From a letter to his friend Charles Diodati, written the year before he departed for the Continent, we learn that he was reading history deeply at that time; but we are inclined to believe that his genius may have been distracted from the work of original composition by the ever-increasing political complications of the times. Laud was carrying out his "plan" with all the spiteful rigour of his character. He was now archbishop of Canterbury, and the real director of public affairs in the kingdom. England had no Parliament, but *that* did not distress Laud much. The Privy Council, he thought, could transact business better; and where that failed, the Court of High Commission, meeting in the famous Star-Chamber, over which the Archbishop himself presided, was certain to succeed. At this period, the chief work the "government" had to perform was the infliction of punishments (often hideously

cruel) for nonconformity. The higher offices of the Church were filled by the adherents of Laud, and new and extraordinary powers were conferred on the bishops for trying offenders. The indignation excited by the *Articles of Visitation* was great; and no wonder, when we read that the Articles of the Bishop of Norwich involved eight hundred and ninety-seven distinct queries! The universities, as well as the rest of the nation, were placed under this hateful espionage. Everywhere Puritan sentiments were pertinaciously attempted to be repressed by a body of "black dragoons." Milton was the last man in England to be patient under such a system, which required for its perfection the slitting of noses, the cropping of ears, the humiliation of the pillory, fines, imprisonments, and exile! That he was fiercely wroth against it is evident from his next poem, *Lycidas*, a threnody written in 1637, in memory of Edward King, Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge, who was drowned on his passage to Ireland in the autumn of that year. It contains a passage which, as Milton himself subsequently said, "foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height." The poem has been severely, not to say savagely, criticised by Dr Johnson, as destitute alike of nature, art, truth, and novelty! The "diction" is asserted to be "harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing." The rage of the critic, partly springing perhaps from his having discovered its malignity to the Church, is wildly unjust. *Lycidas* is simply one of a series of mementoes of a favourite tutor, by university wits and scholars. Such a poem could hardly have been otherwise than stiffly classical. The wonder is that it was not written in Latin, like most of the other pieces. Instead of feeling surprised at its coldness and want of passion, we are rather delighted to see the warm breath of living emotion gently diffuse itself through the frozen forms of an academic exercise. In other respects there is not a single objection of Johnson's that will bear investigation. Not only individual lines, but whole

passages of *Lycidas*, have a rhythmic beauty of expression far superior to the monotonous metallic clang of the Doctor's own couplets.

Milton about this period, if not earlier, appears to have formed a wish to visit the Continent. The death of his mother, 3d April 1637, may have left him more at liberty to gratify his desire. It may be thought strange that one so keenly interested in the welfare of his country should have chosen to leave it in so critical an hour; but we should remember that the Puritans were still without organisation or definite purpose, and that, at this very time, some of the most practical and sagacious of the party, including Cromwell and Hampden, were seriously meditating voluntary expatriation as the only course left open to them. Besides, though Milton was a patriot, he was also in an equal measure a scholar and poet, and doubtless longed to visit the classic shores of the Mediterranean. There perhaps he thought amid new scenes to regain that composure of intellect and imagination which we suspect had been broken up at home by the pressure of thoughts which he would have reckoned it shameful and found it impossible to exclude. The consent of his generous and affectionate father was obtained; and in April 1638 he set out on his travels, accompanied by a single man-servant. He carried with him some letters of introduction; among others, one from Sir Henry Wotton, Provost of Eton, who had besides sent the young poet a private letter, warmly praising his *Comus*, and giving him the advice which he says he himself got from a Roman courtier how to behave himself in Italy,—*I pensieri stretti, et il viso sciolto*, ("Thoughts close, and looks loose.") He first proceeded to Paris, where he stayed only a few days, but long enough to be introduced to "that most learned man, Hugo Grotius," by Lord Scudamore, English ambassador at the Court of Versailles. The two men were worthy to converse with each other, for, however dissimilar in their literary aspects, two nobler scholars, two more dauntless liberal and

philosophic thinkers, were not then to be found in the whole range of Christendom! Journeying leisurely through the French provinces, he arrived at Nice in the month of June, where his eyes first caught the beauty of Italian scenery. Thence he sailed to Genoa and Leghorn, and proceeded inland to Florence, the centre of Italian art and *belles lettres*. Here Milton remained for two months. The reception which he met with from members of the various literary academies,—the Della Crusca, Florentine, &c.,—was in the highest degree courteous and hospitable, after the fashion of the age. Yet it perhaps did no more than express their surprise and admiration that a boreal region should have nurtured a better scholar and verse-maker than them all. Milton, on the other hand, was profoundly gratified. “The memory of you, Jacopo Gaddi,—of you, Carlo Datti,—of you, Frescobaldi, Coltellini, Bonmattei, Chimentelli, Francini, and of not a few others, always delightful and pleasant as it is to me, time shall never destroy,” (*Defensio Secunda*.) The most interesting incident in his residence at Florence was his interview with the illustrious Galileo, “a prisoner to the Inquisition,” as Milton says with befitting scorn, “for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licencers thought.” Galileo was not, as is sometimes supposed, immured in a dungeon, but was simply restricted to his little villa at Arcetri, near Florence. He was then old and blind, but he still prosecuted, with the help of assistants, his favourite study, and may have also amused his visitor (nothing loath to listen) with some sallies of that mocking and mordant wit, at the expense of ignorant priests, which, far more than his “heresy” about the rotation of the earth, cost him trouble during his life. The poet has preserved two reminiscences of the “Tuscan artist” in his *Paradise Lost*. From Florence he travelled, by way of Sienna, to Rome, where the same civilities awaited him that he had experienced in the former city. The first acquaintance that he made here was Lucas Holstenius, a quondam Oxford student, secretary

to Cardinal Barberini, and one of the keepers of the Vatican library. Through him he was introduced to the Cardinal himself, who was particularly noted for his politeness to English visitors. Barberini was wonderfully cordial towards Milton. He singled him out at one of his magnificent musical entertainments, and presented him to the company in a most honourable fashion. With other Roman scholars also, such as Salsillus and Selvagii, he became intimate, and received from them, as from his Florentine friends, those "written encomiums" which he prized so highly. The flattery of these encomiums may be gross, if based on Milton's Latin verse alone; but they nevertheless indicate that their authors had some clear apprehension of the transcendent genius of the young Englishman, who amply repaid them for their praise. As Johnson bluntly puts it, "The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce." From Rome, after a lapse of nearly two months, Milton went on to Naples, in the company of an "Eremitic friar," who introduced him to Giovanni Battista Manso, Marquis of Villa, a chivalrous and highly-educated nobleman, the friend and protector of the illustrious but unhappy Tasso, himself a poet and philosopher, (of the elegant ethico-sentimental school,) and the founder of various literary institutions in the city where he lived. Manso quickly conceived a great regard for the young stranger, frequently called upon him, acted as his guide in his rambles about Naples, and told him that he would gladly have shown him additional attentions, but for the dangerous notice which he had attracted by the freedom of his speech "in the matter of religion." We are not to suppose that Milton was rude—only that he was outspoken. Among the accomplished scholars with whom he associated, he did not feel it necessary to be as reticent as among a circle of cowed monks; and he tells us that in their company he frankly uttered his views when occasion demanded. Before he left, Milton addressed to Manso a splendid epistle in Latin, in consideration of which, the latter presented the poet with

two cups of rich workmanship, accompanied with what Johnson truly enough calls a "sorry distich," the point of which is taken from the famous *mot* of Pope Gregory the Great, on seeing some fair-haired, blue-eyed English slaves exposed for sale in the market-place of Rome :—

*"Ut mens, forma, decor, facies, mos, si pietas sic,
Non Anglus, verum hercle Angelus, ipse forea"*

Milton's original intention was to have visited Sicily and Greece, but he says, "The sad news of civil war coming from England called me back ; for I considered it disgraceful that, while my fellow-countrymen were fighting at home for liberty, I should be travelling abroad at ease for intellectual purposes." From Naples he returned to Rome, where he again spent two months, and arrived once more in Florence towards the end of February 1639. After a short excursion to Lucca, he set out for Venice, crossing the Apennines, and passing through Bologna and Ferrara. His residence in the island-built city was of short duration ; there he shipped for England the "rare and curious" books which he had collected in his travels up and down the Peninsula. His course next lay through the fertile plains and famous towns of Lombardy, over the Pennine Alps, and along Lake Lemman to Geneva, where he stayed for a week or two, to enjoy the society of "the most learned professor of theology," John Diodatti, uncle of his friend Charles, who had just recently died. Resuming his homeward journey, he passed rapidly through France, and landed in England about the beginning of autumn, after an absence of fifteen months. During all his wanderings his conduct had been blameless—worthy of him who thought no man should dare to be a poet whose life was not itself a poem. "I take God to witness," he solemnly affirms, "that in all those places where so many things are considered lawful, I lived sound and untouched from all profligacy and vice, having this thought perpetually with me, that though I might escape the eyes of men, I certainly could not the eyes of God."

Milton's first step after his return was to look out for some occupation. He must have felt that his generous father had supported him long enough, and would now be anxious to earn an independent livelihood. He therefore resolved to settle in London, and rented rooms in the house of one Russel, a tailor, in St Bride's Churchyard, and commenced a private boarding-school. Dr Johnson invites his readers to make themselves merry at this ludicrous result of the poet's patriotic vapourings. Unhappily for the doctor, there is not in the circumstance adequate cause for hilarity. Milton did not hurry home to run a-muck against every prelate whom he might chance to meet in the streets. Politically he was quite destitute of influence. He had taken no part in public affairs before he left for the Continent; and if known at all to the men of action, it could only be as a recluse scholar and poet, whose services might one day be of use to them; but at present, he was probably of less consequence among the Puritans than the humblest martyr who had got his nose slit, or his ears cropped, for laughing at Laud. He had no opportunity, therefore, of rushing headlong into some prominent situation, (as Dr Johnson seems to think he was bound to do,) and was obliged to bide his time—a thing which, as we have seen, it was not difficult for him to do, and which in any case he had not to do long. From St Bride's Churchyard he removed to a larger house in Aldersgate Street, where his pupils increased. But, however laboriously and earnestly Milton may have devoted himself to their education, his chief thoughts were bestowed on the affairs of his country. For the next twenty years or so of his life, we catch hardly a single glimpse of the poet in his singing robes; but even amid the controversies into which he plunged, the sound of magnificent harmonies, such as English prose never knew before or since, rises up at intervals, from "a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes," preluding the grandeur of his future verse.

The strife between Charles and the people of England was

now about to assume a more desperate and sanguinary character than it had hitherto presented. The despotism of Laud and Strafford was on the eve of being overthrown. In 1640 the memorable Long Parliament assembled; its members fierce with suppressed rage, and full of indomitable resolution. Instead of voting supplies, they at once impeached and condemned Strafford, and drew up a grand remonstrance, comprising a catalogue of all the grievances, civil and religious, to which the nation had been subject since the days of Elizabeth. The disorders and tyrannies of the Church—in other words, the policy of Laud—was the special object of their onslaught. Milton had long ago made up his mind on such matters. His contempt for bishops was almost fanatical. We might say he burned with scorn, and on their devoted heads poured out all the vials of his haughtiest wrath. To him they stood out as the principal enemies of that intellectual and moral freedom which he loved with a strength of passion that perhaps none of his contemporaries felt; he was therefore not slow to fan the flame of Parliamentary opposition. In 1641 appeared his treatise on *Reformation*, and a reply to Archbishop Usher's "Confutation" of the five Puritan ministers, who wrote against Bishop Hall under the name of Smectymnus. Next year he published *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, a work of splendid eloquence and power; but especially interesting and valuable to us now on account of sketches which it gives of the literary studies and designs of the author. From it we learn that it was the "written encomiums" of the scholars of Italy that first inspired with the hope of leaving "something so written to aftertimes, that they should not willingly let it die." He tells us how his mind "in the spacious circuits of her musing," had revolved many themes as the subject of epic strains, but that he had not yet determined "where to lay the pattern of a Christian hero." He proudly pledges himself, however, when a season of peace comes, and he can once more behold

"the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies," to do for his own country, as far as in him lies, what "the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those old Hebrews," did for theirs; but such great things, he sublimely confesses, are only to be accomplished "by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit, who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases." Already it is manifest Milton's thoughts are setting in the direction of *Paradise Lost*.

The Civil War now broke out, and the poet appears to have been for some time absorbed in its mighty issues; at least his voice is silent. When Reading was taken by the Parliamentary forces, his aged father left Horton, and came to reside in London with his son. Next year Milton did a rather dangerous thing; he slipped quietly out to the country on Whitsunday morning, without letting anybody know, and about a month after came back with a wife. The lady's name was Mary Powell, daughter of a Squire Powell, living at Forest Hill, Shotover. Milton had known the family before. Unfortunately for his domestic comfort, the Powells were royalists, and his wife, who had been accustomed to much company and gaiety, and had been wont to dance with the King's officers at home, soon grew wearied of the austere and philosophic society of her husband, fretted perhaps by the vicissitudes of the dread conflict waging round him, which poor Mary Powell could never sympathise with, nor rationally apprehend. At the end of their severe honeymoon she got her friends to ask her home till Michaelmas; but when Michaelmas came she refused to return. Milton twice wrote to her to come back, but in vain; whereupon he resolved to divorce her, for he was not a man to do things by halves. We must say that this incident presents the poet in a most unamiable light, and in spite of all the ungenerous talk about the "commonplace" character of Squire Powell's

daughter, we cannot help thinking that Milton's revenge was both too savage and too sudden. However, he immediately proceeded to justify the course he intended to pursue ; and in 1644 published *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, and *The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*, followed in 1645 by *Tetrachordon ; or, Expositions upon the four chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marriage ;* and *Colasterion*. The Westminster Assembly of Divines were then sitting, and of course could not allow Milton's heresy to pass. They caused him to be brought before the Lords, but he was dismissed without censure. From this period, according to Johnson, dates the poet's enmity to Presbyterianism ; but the observation is more plausible than acute. Milton never liked, or could have liked, the Presbyterians ; the intense love of individual liberty which characterised him instinctively repelled him from a religious body that objected not to the power of the Church, but merely to the constitution of the hierarchy. His sympathies naturally turned towards Independency, and even that form of religion was ultimately too cramped for him ; so that finally he was forced to fall back into a solitary Christianity, and to worship God alone.

Besides his writings on divorce, the year 1644 also witnessed the publication of his *Tractate on Education*, which, though Utopian in its general design, abounds in the most sagacious and practical remarks on the nature of true education ; and his *Areopagitica, a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*. The last of these is indisputably the most magnificent prose composition in the English tongue. It rises as high above all other prose writings as *Paradise Lost* above all other poems. The massiveness of its thoughts, the majesty of its sentiments, and the inexhaustible wealth of its language, make us imagine that we are listening rather to "the large utterance of the early gods," than to the voice of a mere mortal. It contains passages, compared with which (to use the words of Macaulay) "the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance." The picture of England is

especially sublime. "Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks; methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam: purging and unscaling her long abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance; while the whole noise of timorous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about amazed at what she means."

Next year (1645) Milton published the first edition of his English and Latin poems, and about the same time was reconciled to his wife, who came to him and "implored forgiveness on her knees." She appears to have taken this step by the advice of her relatives, who were probably beginning to grow alarmed at the military successes of the Puritans, and also at the audacity of the poet, who had set about courting another lady. There is no reason, however, to doubt that the reconciliation was both genuine and permanent. The King's officers had little time for dancing now, and perhaps Mary Powell had grown a sadder and a wiser woman since her foolish flight. After the taking of Oxford by the Parliamentary forces in June 1646, her father, mother, brothers, and sisters came up to London, and were received in a frank and kindly manner by Milton. A month or so later she gave birth to her first child, a daughter named Anne. The house was inconveniently crowded; one reason, it may be conjectured, why Milton's pen remained idle for a time. On the 1st of January 1647 his father-in-law died, and in the March following he lost his own father, who lived long enough to see at least the dawn of his son's reputation. The return of the Powells to Oxfordshire again restored the house to quiet. "It now looked," says Philips, "like a house of the Muses only." Milton's scholars, however, rather fell off, and so in 1647 he removed to a smaller house in Holborn, opening at the back into Lincoln's Inn Fields, where he continued his private studies, and also commenced his *History*

of England. In political controversy his help was not at this moment needed, for the triumph of the Puritans was so complete that "Apologies" of any kind would have been superfluous; but the execution of Charles I., 30th January 1649—an act of tremendous audacity, which startled and offended multitudes of people both at home and abroad—completely altered the state of matters. In less than a fortnight Milton was in the field with a pamphlet "to compose the minds of the people," entitled *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, in which he seeks to justify the conduct of the Parliament. The Puritan leaders were delighted with his zeal and promptitude; they foresaw how valuable his services might be to their cause, and offered him the office of Foreign or Latin Secretary to the Council of State, with a salary of £290. Milton accepted it, and entered on his duties 15th March 1649. Besides his ordinary and more official work of turning into Latin the foreign correspondence of the country, he had at times more arduous and dangerous work to do. Scarcely had he entered on his new appointment, when the famous *Icon Basilike* appeared, professing to give an account of King Charles in his later misfortunes, and pathetically painting him as a broken-hearted saint. This little lachrymose book became immensely popular, and Milton was requested to counteract its influence. With this aim in view, he wrote in the course of the year a pamphlet, entitled *Iconoclastes*, ("The Image-breaker,") in which is more visible than in any of his previous publications that spirit of bitter, envenomed, and savage invective that reached its culmination in his next encounter, which immediately awaited him. Towards the close of 1649, Claude de Saumaise, better known as *Salmasius*, a professor in the University of Leyden, and reckoned one of the first scholars, if not the very first, in Europe, published his *Defensio Regia pro Carolo Primo ad Carolum Secundum*. He undertook the defence at the request of Charles II., (then living in Holland,) and is said to have received beforehand a hundred

jacobuses "to excite his industry." The Council of State, as in the previous case, desired Milton to draw up a reply. In the early part of 1651 appeared his *Pro Populo Anglicano, Defensio*, &c., another of his prose masterpieces, almost worthy to rank along with the *Areopagitica*, were it not for the coarse and even barbarous personalities, the ponderous quips and cranks, and the wretched puns that disfigure it. Salmasius was no match for his opponent in anything except perhaps classical learning. Johnson justly describes him as a man who "probably had not much considered the principles of society, or the rights of government." These were things which Milton, on the other hand, had meditated profoundly for years; and if his ideas were not altogether such as a wise experience would approve, they were at least the grand convictions of a mighty and enthusiastic genius, and moreover they were in harmony with the exalted spirit of the time. Salmasius died at Spa, September 3, 1653; and Milton—such was the inhumanity engendered by controversy in those grim days—pleased himself with the belief that his victory had shortened his adversary's life. But his labours had been too much for his eyesight, originally weak, and in the same year he became wholly blind. A little before this—the exact date is unknown—his wife died, leaving three daughters, Anne, (already mentioned,) aged seven, Mary, five, and Deborah, still an infant.

Milton's next publication appeared in 1654. It was in answer to the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor ad Cælum adversus Parricidas Anglicanos* of Peter Dumoulin, and was entitled *Defensio Secunda pro Populo Anglicano*. More bitter and abusive even than its predecessor, it yet contains passages of the finest eloquence. The panegyric on Cromwell has been often quoted, and will doubtless be thought more just and true in our day (thanks mainly to Thomas Carlyle) than it has been at any period subsequent to the Restoration. In 1655 he published two more controversial pamphlets; and in 1656 married Catherine Woodcock, daughter of a Captain

Woodcock of Hackney. This lady died in childbirth early in the following year. The poet has commemorated her virtues in what we venture to pronounce, in spite of Johnson's criticism, an exquisite sonnet. The death of Cromwell, in 1658, was a fatal blow to Milton's political dreams and hopes; yet he did not at first seem to realise that it was such. No better proof could be given of the essentially theoretical character of his political views than the fact that he thought it possible to argue the nation into maintaining a republican form of government in Church and State. Treatises, letters, and pamphlets, were poured forth by him for the next eighteen or twenty months like earnest supplications; but in vain. The fires of Puritan zeal were extinct, and the nation at large was supplying no more fuel. It might be true, as Milton had said, that "nothing is more pleasing to God, or more agreeable to reason, than that the highest mind should have the sovereign power;" but the highest mind was gone for ever, and the thoughts that had inspired Cromwell were twisted into impracticable crotchets by small bodies of visionary and discordant fanatics. England was heartily tired of these gloomy doctrinaires. It wanted to be "merry England" again, to enjoy cakes and ale, to see lads and lasses dancing on its village-greens; and the result was, the restoration of Charles II. in 1660, amid the ringing of bells, and universal acclamations. All this was very melancholy for Milton to look on. The theocracy which he had so vehemently defended had crumbled into ruins, or rather had vanished like the "baseless fabric of a vision." Instead of those grave and earnest fanatics who, in the time of the Protector, had invested Whitehall with a sombre dignity, there now appeared round the Merry Monarch "a loathsome herd, which could be compared to nothing so fitly as to the rabble of Comus—grotesque monsters, half-bestial, half-human, dropping with wine, bloated with gluttony, and reeling in obscene dances," (Macaulay's *Essays*, "Milton.") Nothing was left for the blind poet but to withdraw into the inner

sanctuary of his nature, where the new order of things could not come, where "the barbarous dissonance" of the times, "the sound of riot and ill-managed merriment, the rudeness and swilled insolence of late wassailers," would be unheard, and where he might enjoy absolute freedom

"Before the starry threshold of Jove's court,
 Where those immortal shapes
 Of bright aerial spirits live insphered
 In regions mild of calm and serene air,
 Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
 Which men call earth."

In truth, Milton had already done so. No sooner had the great Cromwell died than as if, with a prophetic, though at the time unconscious, instinct that his political career was at an end, he betook himself to the composition of *Paradise Lost*. It was a divine method of consolation.

Milton suffered little personally from the Restoration beyond neglect. It is even probable that some forbearance was shown to him. The Attorney-General was ordered to prosecute him for his *Defence of the English People*; but it does not appear that the prosecution was followed up, and his name was not included in the list of exceptions from the Act of Oblivion. There is, moreover, a story to the effect that he was offered by the new government his old office of Latin secretary. The story may not be true, but it indicates, we think, that, in spite of his intense sympathy with Cromwell, and his fierce hatred of the Crown, a certain respect was entertained for his superb abilities. About 1662, he removed from Holborn to Jewin Street, where he married his third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, daughter of a Cheshire gentleman. She proved a good nurse to the blind poet. "God have mercy, Betty," said her husband to her one day about a year before his death, "I see thou wilt perform according to thy promise, in providing me such dishes as I think fit whilst I live, and when I die thou knowest that I have left thee all." Philips reports less favourably. He says that she oppressed her step-children; but as Milton complains that his daugh-

ters were "unkind" and "undutiful," the accusation of the nephew may imply little real harshness after all. It is easy to see that she would require to look very sharply after girls who "made nothing of deserting" their blind and helpless father, who "did combine together with the maid to cheat him in her marketings," who "made away with some of his books, and would have sold the rest to the dunghill woman." On the other hand, we must not forget the repulsive task which he had imposed on them. He had taught them to read, without understanding, all the languages which he knew himself; and to be forced (as they habitually were) to utter for hours consecutive words which conveyed no meaning to their ears, could not but be, as Johnson says, "a trial of patience almost beyond endurance," more particularly to girls who inherited from their mother a decided aversion to literature and philosophy! In 1665, Milton made his last change of residence to a small house in Artillery Walk, leading into Bunhill Fields. A picture of him as he appeared at this period of his life is interesting. According to the painter Richardson, "an aged clergyman of Dorsetshire found John Milton in a small chamber hung with rusty green, sitting in an elbow-chair, and dressed neatly in black; pale, but not cadaverous; his hands and fingers gouty, and with chalk-stones." Richardson himself gives us a pleasant glimpse of the old poet, sitting "before his door in a gray coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as in his own room, receiving the visits of the people of distinguished parts, as well as quality." Among the former was "glorious John" Dryden, who, though still addicted to the composition of those absurd tragedies which made Milton pronounce him a good rhymist, but no poet, fully recognised the immense genius of his friend. Aubrey has left us a minute account of his habits. In summer, he used to rise at four; in winter at five o'clock. He then heard a chapter of the Hebrew Bible, after which he breakfasted, and had books read to him, or dictated till twelve. Then he

took a short walk, dined at one, spent the afternoon in his garden, in strolling about the neighbourhood, and in playing on the organ. In the evening, he would entertain visitors from six to eight, and take a light supper with them. When they departed, "he had a quiet pipe of tobacco, and a glass of water, and then retired to rest." His conversation, we are told, was "extremely pleasant, but satirical," and he "was visited by the learned much more than he did desire."

After seven years or so of regular but not exhausting labour, (he composed from twenty to fifty lines at a time,) *Paradise Lost* was completed. It was sold (27th April 1667) to Samuel Simmons, bookseller, for £5, with the promise of a second £5 when 1300 copies of the first edition, a third £5 when as many of the second, and a fourth £5 when the same number of the third edition should be cleared off—each edition to consist of 1500 copies. The first edition was sold in the space of two years, but the second did not appear till the year of the poet's death. When he had finished the poem, he showed it to his friend Ellwood, the Quaker, who remarked: "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise found*?" About a year after, Milton handed his friend a second manuscript. It was *Paradise Regained*! The latter poem, however, was not published till 1671, when it appeared along with *Samson Agonistes*—his last poetical effort. These were succeeded after two years by a second edition of his minor poems. In addition, he wrote several prose works in the interval elapsing between the Restoration and his death, which may be briefly enumerated. *Accidence Commence't Grammar*, (of the Latin tongue, 1661;) *The History of Britain*, (as far as the Conquest, 1670;) *Artis Logicæ Plenior Institutio*, (after the method of Ramus, 1672;) *Of True Religion*, (in which he is for tolerating every religious sect except Roman Catholics, partly on the ground that there is no heresy except a denial of the paramount authority of Scripture, 1673;) *Epistolarum Familiarum Liber Unus*, (a collection of Latin letters to his

friends, and college exercises, 1674;) *A Brief History of Moscovia*, &c., (published eight years after Milton's death;) and his now famous *De Doctrina Christiana*, (first discovered by Mr Lemon in the State Paper Office in 1823, and edited and translated by the Rev. C. Sumner, afterwards Bishop of Winchester.) Its importance arises from the fact that it has settled the question of the poet's faith, proving him to be an Arian, as some critics had previously suspected from the tone of one or two passages in *Paradise Lost*. Milton died Nov. 8, 1674, leaving property to the value of £1500. He was buried in the Church of St Giles, Cripplegate, beside the father who had loved him, and whom he had loved so well.

Milton's life was in the main one of cheerful godliness. Although austere in his morals, he was not morose in his disposition. Political controversy, intensified in its virulence by religious animosities, hurried him at times into savage personalities and fanatical hates, but his soul was by nature serenely serious. In the quiet and still air of delightful studies he enjoyed supreme felicity; and even in old age, when darkness hung about him day and night, and evil tongues were busy, the vision that rises before us, as we think of the blind poet musing on his mighty theme, or listening to the oracles of God, to the verse of Euripides, Dante, or Spenser, or accompanying with song the thrilling music of the organ, is not that of a soured and disappointed politician, but of a seraphic bard, who drinks liberally of sweet and solemn joys from the perennial founts of his own pure genius.

Some additional remarks upon the characteristics of Milton's genius may be fitly appended to the preceding memoir. The poem in which these are most conspicuous is *Paradise Lost*,—by universal consent, the greatest work of its author. The form of the poem is the Epic—the noblest style of poetry; the subject, the Fall of Man—the most momentous event in the history of the race; the purpose, “to vindicate the ways of God to man”—the most glorious that could inspire a creature. Milton had thus at the outset, as Addison

observes, an advantage over all other writers ; and hence the question of his superiority is dependent simply on the circumstance, whether or not he has proved himself equal to the grandeur and felicity of his theme. It is hardly necessary to say, that in the opinion of all critics he has been sublimely successful. *Paradise Lost* is acknowledged to be, if not the richest, at least the loftiest effort of imaginative intellect in the whole range of literature. In the elaboration of his "great argument," Milton had to ascend into the heaven of heavens, to place himself beside the throne of the Almighty, to listen to the "loud hosannas" of adoring angels, to survey the "bright pavement that like a sea of jasper shone, impurpled with celestial roses," and to enter into the august councils of the Father and the Son ; he had to descend into the depths of hell, and make himself familiar with its "floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire," its "sights of woe," its "regions of sorrow," its "doleful shades, where peace and rest can never dwell," and where "hope never comes that comes to all ;" to find an entrance into the soul of Satan, and his companion fiends, and to mark every vicissitude of their agony, despair, and hate ; he had to cross the trackless wastes of Chaos, and reveal "the secrets of the hoary deep ;" he had to visit "blissful Paradise," the garden of God,—its delicious glades and bowers, whose trees "bloom ambrosial fruit ;" its "crisp'd brooks," that "run nectar" over "orient-pearl and sands of gold ;" its "umbrageous grots and caves," hung with clusters of the mantling vine ; and, above all, he had to think with the first of men and the first of women, and not discolour the divine simplicity of their thoughts with the conceptions of a later experience. It was, in truth, a gigantic task, yet we may safely say that on the whole Milton has performed it like a giant. He has failed—only where success was impossible to a creature. The language which he has put into the mouth of the Deity in the third book of *Paradise Lost* is excessively tame, but it could scarcely have been otherwise. An idea constantly present in

the Scriptures is the unsearchableness of God's thoughts and ways: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high. I cannot attain unto it." "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." It was probably a profound sense of the mystery of the Divine nature, and of the utter ignorance in which we must ever remain regarding that awful Life, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, that quelled the imaginative ardour of the poet, and forced him to take refuge in the venerable platitudes of theology. He perhaps felt that the richest embellishments of style would, after all, be infinitely unworthy of the speaker, and the most elaborate rhetoric only a splendid profanation. Many a poet has risen to a wondrous altitude of thought (and none higher than Milton himself) in celebrating the praises of God, but not one has ever succeeded in making Him speak divinely. We could not worship the Eternal but for our belief in the *unutterable* majesty of His spirit, and we therefore shrink with an instinctive wisdom and reverence from every attempt to perform this impossible miracle. Milton, from the nature of his theme, could not evade the attempt, nor consequently escape the failure.

But on lower ground Milton is supreme. Angels are beings not beyond the conception of a finite imagination. They are possessed by sentiments and influenced by motives similar to, if not identical with, those of mortals. Both have *creaturehood* in common; and if the former are the most exalted of creatures, this circumstance only renders them the noblest subjects of poetical representation. In fitly portraying them, human genius may be tasked to its utmost, but it need not be overtaken. Milton knew this, and girded himself for the work with majestic courage and resolution. He had the qualities necessary for its accomplishment in a far higher degree than any other poet. None ever approached him in magnificence of conception. This

magnificence is partly imaginative and partly moral. His ideas and imagery, impressive in themselves, acquire an additional, though not an alien, dignity from the solemn elevation of his spirit. Simplicity, or clearness, is another of his prominent characteristics. No mist rests on the wide heaven of his imagination, obscuring the outlines of the colossal figures he has summoned into being. These are invested with no doubtful or shadowy grandeur, that a closer inspection might dissipate, but stand out in distinct and palpable sublimity, like the mythic gods of ancient Greece. No person of ordinary intelligence can have any difficulty in grasping Milton's meaning, or in seeing clearly the picture which the poet sets before him. He may fail to comprehend its full truth, power, and beauty—for that requires a certain affinity of nature, an inborn appreciation of *greatness*—but in other respects he is on a par with the most refined and cultivated reader. Milton's genius is not marked by any subtle suggestiveness, such as we find in Shakespeare, and after another fashion, in Wordsworth. Nor, perhaps, is its absence to be regretted in his case. The tendency of such a quality of imagination is adverse to that vast and massive portraiture which his theme required, as may be seen from a consideration of Goethe's *Mephistopheles*. The evil spirit of Faust is a marvellously subtle creation, perhaps in deeper harmony with a philosophic view of Satanic character and agency than Milton's arch-fiend, but he wholly lacks the visible splendour, magnitude, energy, and power of the latter. The conception of the German poet may be more profound and penetrating; that of the English poet is more Titanic and august. To appreciate *Mephistopheles*, one must have pondered much over the problem of evil, but a school-boy could hardly fail to be impressed with the colossal outline of *Satan*.

In material grandeur, the Leader of the fallen angels dwarfs into insignificance every figure in literature. The very descriptions of his form and appearance awe the reader.

Milton ransacks nature and mythology to find illustrations sufficiently great to serve his purpose, and then proceeds to amplify them in such a manner as to infuse the feeling of something terrible, baleful, or dangerous. What a picture, for example, is that given us of the Fiend talking to Beelzebub, "with head uplift above the waves," amid the pale glimmering of the livid flames, through which his eyes blaze horribly! He lies, "floating many a rood," like—

"That sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all His works
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream :
Him haply slumbering on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fix'd anchor, in his scaly rind,
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wish'd morn delays."

Even more poetical, with a still more mysterious touch of terror in the illustration, is this other portrait of the "dread commander :"

"His form had not yet lost
All its original brightness ; nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess
Of glory obscured : as when the sun new risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams ; or, from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs."

But it is not the description of Satan's appearance only which displays this dread sublimity ; his character, actions, and sentiments partake of the same. Although his agony is a hundredfold fiercer and more torturing than that of his followers, with what fearfully sublime fortitude does he suppress it! A wild savage hope of ultimate victory in some shape or other, makes him exult with appalling joy, even amid the fiery horrors of hell. After the first stupor caused by defeat has passed off, his indestructible ambition renews its audacity. Almost the first words he utters are —

“What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield.”

Milton does not represent Satan as a vainglorious boaster, as some critics have asserted. On the contrary, he ascribes to him a deadly earnestness of soul. The Fiend believes in himself, and is consequently sincere in his blasphemy. He knows, and confesses, that God is immeasurably greater and wiser than himself; and all the forces of the universe are at His disposal; yet from the fact, that his own nature, his “empyrean substance,” is “by fate” immortal, he eagerly draws the conviction that there is something over which God has no absolute mastery, by virtue of which, eternal war at least may be waged against Him; and *that itself* seems a kind of triumph, inasmuch as it must “disturb His inmost counsels from their destined aim.” No doubt he “vaunts;” but not to conceal his shame or despair; he does so mainly because the invincible pride of his imagination forces him to hope against hope. “I give not heaven for lost,” is the very opposite of a reckless boast; it is the fierce fanatical conviction of an impiety that is prepared to struggle for ever against the Almighty. In thus representing the character of Satan, Milton perhaps meant to teach us how thoroughly evil, or sin, blinds the hostile soul to a true comprehension of the Highest, so that He ceases to appear as a Being who must be ever victorious in all strife that He wages. Satan can never see the true relation in which he stands to God. His notions of the Divine omniscience become so confused and weakened with his Fall, that he thinks God may be outwitted by guile, if not overcome by force.

The qualities in which Satan surpasses all his followers, are daring, wisdom, and resolution. Moloch, long afterward “besmeared with blood of human sacrifice and parents’ tears,” displays a desperate energy, and a murderous thirst for revenge, but he lacks wisdom; the “graceful” orator

Belial, who could make the worse appear the better reason, is at bottom a slothful coward, without real insight or definite purpose; Mammon is actually more at home in hell than in heaven, and would fain settle down quietly in his new abode, and begin digging for gems and gold; and Beelzebub is only greater than the others by being an *alias* of Satan. His speech in the great council of the fiends might have been uttered by the chief himself, and indeed we are told that his "devilish counsel" was first devised and proposed by Satan. Even his appearance and form closely resemble those of the latter—

"Deep on his front engraven,
Deliberation sat, and public care;
And princely counsel in his face yet shone
Majestic, though in ruin; sage he stood,
With Atlantian shoulders fit to bear
The weight of mightiest monarchies."

But the real burden of the infernal policy falls on Satan. To him belongs the mighty work of reanimating the courage and hopes of the rebel angels, of reconciling them to their black fate—

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven;"

of organising new plans to frustrate the Divine purpose, and of carrying these into execution. In malignant power of enthusiasm, sagacity of device, and force of will, he towers far "above his fellows." Is it not sublimely characteristic, too, that he alone appears capable of moral anguish? When his myriad followers file before him, though his eye is "cruel," it yet cast

"*Signs of remorse* and passion to behold.

Millions of spirits for his fault amerced
Of heaven, and from eternal splendours flung
For his revolt."

When he tries to speak,

"Thrice he assay'd, and thrice, in spite of scorn,
Tears such as angels weep, burst forth."

And when he is nearing Eden after his solitary flight through Chaos, he almost grieves at the ruin he meditates ; pouring forth for the first time the hidden misery of his soul, and for an instant, at least, seeming to regret that mad ambition which had cost him his original felicity. Such agonies are unknown to the lesser fiends, and in nothing is Satan's immense superiority to them more admirably exhibited. These faint, illusive, momentary relentings heighten by contrast our idea of the implacable animosity which he cherishes against God, and are master-touches of genius. But they are not allowed to move him one jot or tittle from his purpose ; on the contrary, they only serve to intensify his hate, and to goad him into a more diabolical rage.

Milton's pictures of Eden and of our first parents are in their way as wonderful as those of Pandemonium and its dread inhabitants. The change from the burning lake with its fiery surges ; from the lurid splendours of the infernal palace ; from the wild distracted games of the fiends, and their almost pathetic efforts to soothe their misery with music and philosophic speculation, though in this they "find no end, in wandering mazes lost," to the soft and sunny landscapes of Paradise, with its tranquil skies, its murmuring waters, and dewy meadows, its glowing and perfumed orchards, its cool groves of palm and olive, of myrtle and laurel, gently alive with vernal airs, and the gladsome song of birds—is infinitely delicious. We are in truth somewhat oppressed by the sublimity that reigns without intermission in hell. The scenery, the characters, the sentiments, are all conceived on a scale of such magnitude ; there is such a continual presence of the fearful, the horrible, and the ghastly, such a violent play of mighty passions, that our imagination is wearied with the strain put upon its activity, and we feel relieved when we escape the society of beings who, after all, are only magnificent maniacs, and find ourselves breathing the balmy air of the new-born earth, and wandering amid scenes of untainted loveliness. The point has been much but

(as it appears to us) unprofitably discussed, to what extent Milton's descriptions of nature display originality of imagination. Some critics very decidedly deny his merit in this respect. They admit the richness, but not the freshness of his pictures. Now originality in landscape-painting may show itself in two ways—either in the general conception of a scene, or in the *curiosa felicitas* of the language. Some poets excel in both; Wordsworth, for example, who specially cultivated this branch of his art, and has attained in it, we may almost venture to say, an unapproachable excellence. Keats, in his *Endymion* at least, is an illustration of the second of these forms of originality. His word-painting in that poem is at times miraculously fine and novel; but the *total* effect of a series of lines is often next to nothing, on account of the entire absence of that spirit of unity which gives cohesion to the separate touches, and finally produces an impressive whole. Shakespeare, too, when he pleases, can surprise us with a most subtle and delicate flash of description, that reveals nature in a rare and unexpected light. The necessities of the drama forbade him to do more. On the other hand, there are poets whose originality has none of this picturesque nicety of phrase, who appear indifferent to novelty, or incapable of it; but who can nevertheless imagine some grand or beautiful whole—in itself thoroughly original, and can work it out by the use of pre-existing materials. Such was the case in some measure with Spenser, but to a far greater degree with Milton; and hence there is nothing to alarm us in the numerous “plagiarisms” which Warton, and Todd, and others, have discovered in his poems. It is true that he borrowed choice expressions freely from his predecessors, but it was to elaborate a picture of his own, not to imitate any of theirs. Milton's particular phrases may often be found elsewhere, but his *Pandemonium* and his *Paradise* exist nowhere but in his own immortal work. Let it be remembered that Milton was the greatest *scholar* among the English poets, that books had been his constant com-

panions from childhood ; that he was actually familiar with the poetry of the classic and English authors before he knew or could consciously appreciate that of Nature, and we will easily understand why a certain learned gloss is visible in his language, and his pages teem with reminiscences of an anterior literature.

Our first parents are delineated with consummate skill. What a rich, luscious simplicity there is even in the physical description ! Milton's genius was thoroughly *sensuous*, and delighted excessively in colour and form, though the severe rectitude of his moral nature gives a feeling of purity even to his materialism. There are, indeed, one or two amorous passages between Adam and Eve that are perhaps rendered with an extreme freedom ; but the poet is careful to remind us that nuptial dalliance was no sin before the Fall had introduced "guilty shame" into the world. Milton's ideas were chaste, but not mawkish, on the subject of sexual love. Nothing, again, appears to us more charming or more perfect in general than the language which he puts into the mouths of Adam and Eve. The mild gravity of exhortation, the air of affectionate yet scarcely conscious command, the strong yet serious tenderness of affection in the former, are exquisitely contrasted with the yielding softness, the coy submission, and the meek yet keen delight that Eve takes in her husband's kisses and caresses. In her speech there is a most graceful and artless eloquence. Her account of how she first became aware of her existence is as faultless in conception and execution as anything that exists in literature. The original hint from which the picture was designed is probably to be found in the myth of Narcissus. Eve says that her own image in the "watery gleam" so charmed her, that had she not heard a voice,

"There I had fix'd

Mine eyes till now, and pined with vain desire."

But how admirable the idea of adapting it to the "mother of all living," and how vivid and rich the amplification ! So

borrowing, Milton is assuredly open to no censure. And where shall we find simpler and lovelier lines than these in which she tells her love to Adam, in words of "linked sweetness long drawn out?"

"Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
 With charm of earliest birds; pleasant the sun,
 When first on this delightful land he spreads
 His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
 Glistering with dew : fragrant the fertile earth
 After soft showers; and sweet the coming-on
 Of grateful evening mild; then silent night,
 With this her solemn bird, and this fair moon,
 And these the gems of heaven, her starry train :
 But neither breath of morn, when she ascends
 With charm of earliest birds; nor rising sun
 On this delightful land; nor herb, fruit, flower,
 Glistering with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
 Nor grateful evening mild; nor silent night,
 With this her solemn bird; nor walk by moon,
 Or glittering starlight, without thee is sweet."

The morning hymn of praise which Adam and Eve offer in concert to their Maker is, from beginning to end, full of majestic beauty. Coleridge's *Hymn to Mont Blanc* is a deliberate imitation of its melodiously-rolling verse, and of its solemn and universal invocations. That Milton has on the whole succeeded in making our first parents preserve in speech and action a consistency with his preconceived idea of their character and knowledge is, we think, undoubted. They are neither the simious savages of modern speculative science, nor the spiritual and intellectual prodigies of an irreflective and fanciful theology. They inspire neither disgust by a barbarous ignorance, nor credulity by impossible perfections. They are modelled upon the simple, dignified, and philosophic representation in the *Book of Genesis*, which makes a man a unique-creature, bearing only a material and superficial relation to the other animal life of the planet, and finding his true prototype, not in the beasts that perish, but in the spirit of the Almighty himself. "Let us make man in our own image." But Milton, as we have said, has been

careful to avoid extravagance in his conception. Although Adam and Eve are stamped with the divine impress, they are not divine. In acquired or experimental knowledge, either moral or mental, they are mere children. It would, of course, have been absurd, either in a poetic or in a philosophic point of view, to have represented them as sheer *know-nothings*, the mansion of their brain full of large but unfurnished apartments! Milton does not, indeed, perplex himself with the origin of human knowledge. The riddles of speculation, the outcome of a restless subjectivity, had no charm for his clear, strong, objective genius. He had a wholesome aversion to all that kind of thinking which "finds no end in wandering mazes lost." Adam and Eve are rightly (for poetic purposes) assumed to possess more than a mere capacity for thought; they actually think and feel from the first moment of their existence. Since their creation was a miracle, why should the primary processes by which the machinery of their mental constitution was set a-going not be miraculous too? Milton endows them with such intellectual and emotional activity as seems least dependent for its exercise on a late experience. Moreover, their freedom from sin, the complete *soundness* of their nature, enables them, as it were, to think with a simple, intuitive wisdom, and to feel with an unconscious yet vivid sensibility. They have not, it is true, a large stock of ideas and sentiments, but those that they have are dignified, noble, and pure, springing from that "simplicity and spotless innocence" of soul that shunned not converse with God or angel. The goodness and glory of the Creator, the rich beauty of Eden by day, the starry mystery of heaven by night, the inexpressible sweetness of life, the charm of their unlabourious tasks, and their instantaneous apprehension of sexual difference, and of the psychological phenomena involved in that difference, are pretty nearly the limits of their thought and conversation. That Milton is uniformly successful in confining their language within these limits is more than

just criticism can admit. When Adam metaphysically explains to Eve how her "uncouth dream of evil" may have originated, he perhaps reminds us more of the schoolman or the Greek peripatetic than of the intuitive child-like philosopher of Paradise, who had hardly yet reached the threshold of intellectual analysis. But, except in one or two instances, the consistency of character and knowledge has been astonishingly preserved; and when we consider that Milton's mind was burdened with the lore of history, his freedom from later allusions seems an almost miraculous triumph of genius.

The unfallen angels,—Uriel, "the interpreter" of God's "great authentic will;" Gabriel, "chief of the angelic guards;" Ithuriel, with his spear of celestial temper, that forces Satan, when seated "squat like a toad" at the ear of Eve, to reassume his proper shape; Zephon, grave in rebuke, "severe in youthful beauty," whose "awful goodness" makes the Fiend stand abashed; Raphael, "the sociable spirit," whose glorious form, when first seen moving from the east through the trees of Eden, seems to Adam's fancy "another morn risen on mid-noon;" Abdiel, of incorruptible fidelity, whose zeal for God gives irresistible strength to his arm; and Michael, "of celestial armies prince," whose sword, tempered "from the armoury of God," in the terrible conflict waged on the plains of heaven, "smote and felled squadrons at once," and made even Satan writhe with hitherto unknown pain,—all these are portrayed, more in outline perhaps, but in the same majestic style, as the leaders of the fallen angels. Michael, in particular, is a grand figure. Though no positive analysis of his angelic characteristics is attempted, yet Milton describes his appearance and actions with such pomp of phrase and imagery, that he distinctly stands before us as a being of transcendent magnificence, strength, and dignity. The poet, in accordance with Jewish belief, of which we have a side glimpse in the *Book of Jude*, makes him the great adversary of Satan—

"Equal in their creation they were form'd."

But for august splendour of description, finally rising into a terrible sublimity, nothing surpasses Raphael's narrative of the rout of the rebel host by the Son of God, in the 6th Book. The passage beginning

"Forth rush'd with whirlwind sound
The chariot of paternal Deity,"

is no doubt borrowed almost *verbatim* from the first chapter of *Ezekiel*. The Scriptures, however, have somehow always been regarded as common property, from which poets may take as liberally and as literally as they please. But what glorious thunder in the roll of the "fierce chariot,"—

"O'er shields and helms and helmed heads he rode,
Of thrones and mighty seraphim prostrate ;"

and the last lines, in which the rebel angels are described as taking their horror-stricken plunge into chaos, actually send a shuddering awe through the imagination—

"Headlong themselves they threw
Down from the verge of heaven; *eternal wrath*
Burnt after them to the bottomless pit."

It is unnecessary to give a sketch of the argument of *Paradise Lost*, since that is obtainable in a few minutes from a glance at the table of contents prefixed to each book. We have thought it better simply to restrict ourselves to a brief analysis of its chief poetical characteristics and merits. It only remains to be added, that the versification partakes of the general loftiness of the poem. It resembles most of all the rich, sonorous music of the organ, now rising up into a rolling thunder of sound, now dying away in clear, thrilling, solemn cadences ; but though capable of the most varied modulation, it attains its highest excellence where the subject is sublime, as in the speeches of Satan, the hymn of Adam and Eve, and in the description of the Son of God going forth to end the war in heaven.

Of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* the limits of our space forbid us to speak. Suffice it to say, that the first

of these poems, which Milton is said to have preferred to *Paradise Lost*, contains passages of the most polished beauty, and of the finest didactic argumentation. In style and spirit it is more classical than its great counterpart, but the subject did not permit of an equally broad and magnificent treatment. It should rather have been called the *Temptation* than *Paradise Regained*, for it relates exclusively to the temptation of Christ in the wilderness; but Milton perhaps selected the latter title to express his conviction that the success of the Saviour in that first grand conflict with Satan in the desert was virtually the triumph over the power of hell, and that His endurance of all future trial might be safely assumed. The style of *Samson Agonistes* is bald and severe; yet it displays withal a sculpturesque sublimity. The versification is strong, but harsh. We hear no more the music of *Comus*, or of *Paradise Lost*; nor do we behold a vestige of that gorgeous illustration that gives to these poems a tropical luxuriance of language. In their stead we have a solemn and rigid harmony, and a hard, stern, plain dignity of speech; but for all that, it is such a poem as only Milton could have executed; and it possesses a peculiarly pathetic interest for us, both because it is the last of his great works, and because it is believed that the blind Hebrew giant, suffering under the ignominy of his fate, is, in some measure, a picture of the old poet himself—

“Fallen on evil days, and evil tongues,
In darkness and with dangers compass’d round.”



His praise, ye winds that from four quarters blow,
Breathe soft or loud ; and wave your tops, ye pines,
With every plaut, in sign of worship wave.
Fountains, and ye that warble as ye flow,
Melodious murmurs, warbling true his praise.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF MILTON.

HYMN TO THE CREATOR.

THESE are Thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty ! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair : Thyself how wondrous then,
Unspeakable ! who sitt'st above these heavens
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these Thy lowest works ; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.
Speak, ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels ; for ye behold Him, and with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle His throne rejoicing ; ye in heaven,
On earth, join, all ye creatures, to extol
Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end.
Fairest of stars, last in the train of night,
If better thou belong not to the dawn,
Sure pledge of day, that crown'st the smiling morn
With thy bright circlet, praise Him in thy sphere,
While day arises, that sweet hour of prime.
Thou sun, of this great world both eye and soul,
Acknowledge Him thy greater ; sound His praise
In thy eternal course, both when thou climb'st,
And when high noon hast gain'd, and when thou fall'st
Moon, that now meet'st the orient sun, now fly'st,
With the fix'd stars, fix'd in their orb that flies ;
And ye five other wandering fires, that move
In mystic dance not without song, resound
His praise, who out of darkness call'd up light.
Air, and ye elements, the eldest birth
Of Nature's womb, that in quaternion run
Perpetual circle, multiform ; and mix
And nourish all things ; let your ceaseless change
Vary to our great Maker still new praise.
Ye mists and exhalations, that now rise
From hill or steaming lake, dusky or gray,
Till the sun paint your fleecy skirts with gold,
In honour to the world's great Author rise ;
Whether to deck with clouds the uncolour'd sky,
Or wet the thirsty earth with falling showers,
Rising or falling still advance His praise.
His praise, ye winds that from four quarters blow,
Breathe soft or loud ; and wave your tops, ye pines,
With every plant, in sign of worship wave.

Fountains, and ye that warble as ye flow,
 Melodious murmurs, warbling tune His praise.
 Join voices, all ye living souls : ye birds
 That, singing, up to heaven-gate ascend,
 Bear on your wings and in your notes His praise.
 Ye that in waters glide, and ye that walk
 The earth, and stately tread, or lowly creep ;
 Witness if I be silent, morn or even,
 To hill or valley, fountain or fresh shade,
 Made vocal by my song, and taught His praise.
 Hail, Universal Lord, be bounteous still
 To give us only good ; and if the night
 Have gather'd aught of evil, or conceal'd,
 Disperse it, as now light dispels the dark.

WORSHIP OF THE ANGELS.

No sooner had the Almighty ceased, but all
 The multitude of angels, with a shout,
 Loud as from numbers without number, sweet
 As from blest voices, uttering joy, heaven rung
 With jubilee, and loud hosannas fill'd
 The eternal regions : lowly reverent
 Towards either throne they bow, and to the ground,
 With solemn adoration, down they cast
 Their crowns, inwove with amaranth and gold ;
 Immortal amaranth, a flower which once
 In Paradise, fast by the tree of life,
 Began to bloom ; but soon for man's offence
 To heaven removed, where first it grew, there grows,
 And flowers aloft, shading the fount of life,
 And where the river of bliss through midst of heaven
 Rolls o'er Elysian flowers her amber stream :
 With these, that never fade, the spirits elect
 Bind their resplendent locks, inwreath'd with beams,
 Now in loose garlands thick thrown off : the bright
 Pavement that like a sea of jasper shone,
 Impurpled with celestial roses, smiled.

MORNING HYMN.

FOUNTAIN of light ! from whom yon rising sun
 First drew his splendour ; Source of life and love !
 Whose smile awakes o'er earth's rekindling face
 The boundless blush of spring ; O first and best !
 Thy essence, though from human sight and search,
 Though from the climb of all created thought
 Ineffably removed ; yet man himself,
 Thy humble child of reason, man may read
 The Maker's hand, intelligence supreme,
 Unbounded power, on all His works impress,

In characters coeval with the sun,
 And with the sun to last ; from world to world,
 From age to age, through every clime reveal'd.
 Hail, Universal Goodness ! in full stream
 For ever flowing
 Through earth, air, sea, to all things that have life ;
 From all that live on earth, in air, and sea,
 The great community of Nature's sons,
 To Thee, first Father, ceaseless praise ascend,
 And in the general hymn my grateful voice
 Be duly heard, among Thy works, not least,
 Nor lowest ; with intelligence inform'd,
 To know Thee and adore : with freedom crown'd.
 Where virtue leads, to follow and be blest.
 Oh, whether, by Thy prime decree ordain'd
 To days of future life, or whether now
 The mortal hour is instant, still vouchsafe,
 Parent and Friend ! to guide me blameless on
 Through this dark scene of error and of ill,
 Thy truth to light me, and Thy peace to cheer.
 All else, of me unask'd, Thy will supreme
 Withhold or grant ; and let that will be done.

ON HIS OWN BLINDNESS.

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide,
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest He, returning, chide ;
 "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
 I fondly ask ! but Patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
 Either man's work, or His own gifts ; who best
 Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best ; His state
 Is kingly. Thousands at His bidding speed
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest !
 They also serve who only stand and wait."

EVE'S LAMENT ON HER EXPULSION FROM PARADISE.

O UNEXPECTED stroke, worse than of death !
 Must I thus leave thee, Paradise ? thus leave
 Thee, native soil ! these happy walks and shades,
 Fit haunt of gods ? where I had hoped to spend,
 Quiet though sad, the respite of that day
 That must be mortal to us both ? O flowers,
 That never will in other climate grow,
 My early visitation, and my last
 At even, which I bred up with tender hand
 From the first op'ning bud, and gave ye names !

Who now shall rear ye to the sun, or rank
 Your tribes, and water from the ambrosial fount?
 Thee, lastly, nuptial bower, by me adorn'd
 With what to sight or smell was sweet, from thee
 How shall I part, and whither wander down
 Into a lower world; to this obscure
 And wild? how shall we breathe in other air
 Less pure, accustom'd to immortal fruits?

A MORNING SONG.

FROM "L'ALLEGRO."

To hear the lark begiu his flight,
 And, singing, startle the dull night
 From his watch-tower in the skies,
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
 Then to come in spite of sorrow,
 And at my window bid good-morrow,
 Through the sweet-briar, or the vine,
 Or the twisted eglantine;
 While the cock with lively din
 Scatters the rear of darkness thin,
 And to the stack or the barn-door,
 Stoutly struts his dames before:
 Oft listening how the hounds and horn
 Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
 From the side of some hoar hill,
 Through the high wood echoing shrill:
 Sometime walking, not unseen,
 By hedge-row elms on hillocks green,
 Right against the eastern gate,
 Where the great sun begins his state,
 Robed in flames, and amber light,
 The clouds in thousand liveries dight,
 While the ploughman, near at hand,
 Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
 And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
 And the mower whets his scythe,
 And every shepherd tells his tale
 Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
 Whilst the landscape round it measures,
 Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
 Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
 Mountains, on whose barren breast
 The lab'ring clouds do often rest;
 Meadows trim with daisies pied,
 Shallow brooks, and rivers wide.

COWPER.

PROBABLY no English poet is more securely fixed in the affections of his countrymen than William Cowper, and there are few, if any, whose lives or writings are better known. Multitudes of excellent people, who positively pride themselves on their indifference to poetry in general, and consider the time devoted to its perusal in a great measure lost, make an exception in his case, and take a pleasure in reading his verse, as genuine as it is rare. The sources of this unusual popularity will be subsequently considered ; in the meantime we proceed to briefly narrate the familiar and painful story of his life.

The family to which the poet belonged was one of very considerable antiquity and importance. In a letter to his friend, Mrs Courtenay, [September 15, 1793,] he says that it was originally of Fifeshire in Scotland ; but this statement appears, from the context, to be merely a whim of the moment, and rests on no evidence. The person who may be regarded as the poet's first historical ancestor, is a certain John Cowper, who, in the fifteenth century, possessed lands at Strode, in Sussex. Several of his descendants held the office of Sheriff of London ; and one William Cowper of Ratling Court, Nonington, Kent, was made a baronet of Nova Scotia by James I., and subsequently an English baronet. He was a thorough royalist, and suffered imprisonment in the stormy days of the Commonwealth, but lived to see the restoration of Charles II. His grandson, Sir William, had

two sons, the elder of whom, also called William, became Lord Chancellor in 1707, and first Earl Cowper; and the younger, named Spenser, Chief-Justice of Chester and a Judge of the Common Pleas. Spencer's second son, John, was chaplain to George II., rector of Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire, and father of the poet.

William Cowper was born at the rectory on the 26th of November 1731. He was a child of delicate constitution, and at a very early period showed symptoms of that morbidly shy and melancholy disposition which was the root of the troubles that afflicted him in after life. In his sixth year he had the misfortune to lose his mother. The qualities for which this lady was distinguished—her piety, tenderness, and good sense—were precisely those that would have fitted her to exercise a healthy influence on her son; and one is inclined to believe, that, had she been spared to watch over and nurture his budding childhood, his life might have been both a happier and manlier one. The impression she made on Cowper, who both in appearance and genius much resembled her, was ineffaceable. Nearly fifty years afterwards he writes, "I can truly say that not a week passes, perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day, in which I do not think of her." The exquisite lines, "*On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture out of Norfolk*," composed in 1790, bear witness to the strength and permanence of his filial affection. Immediately after her death, he was sent to a public school at Market Street in Bedfordshire, kept by a Dr Pitman. It can hardly be doubted that this was a grave mistake. What the fragile, timid, affectionate boy needed, was a quiet home and some semblance of maternal solicitude. Instead of this, he was thrown, without the slightest preparation or natural fitness, into the organised anarchy of school-boy life. The thing happened that always will happen in such cases. He became the butt, the victim, of his rougher and more vigorous companions. One in particular treated him so savagely that Cowper says he was afraid to lift his eyes upon him

higher than his knees, and knew him better by his shoe-buckles than by any other part of his dress. After a residence of two years in the house of Dr Pitman, he was seized with an inflammation in his eyes. Specks appeared in both, and it was even feared that he might lose his sight altogether. He was consequently removed and placed under the care of an eminent oculist, of whose attempts to effect a cure he does not speak very favourably, yet it is certain that the progress of the disease, at least, must have been checked; for in his tenth year he was sent to Westminster School. Here he remained for seven or eight years, acquired a good knowledge of Latin and Greek, and became an excellent cricketer and player at football. Some of his companions and contemporaries afterwards rose to eminence—for example, Impey and Warren Hastings, the famous Indian statesmen; Cumberland and Colman, the dramatists; Lloyd, the litterateur; and Churchill, the satirist,—“the great Churchill,” as Cowper reverently called him. His life at Westminster was undoubtedly happy. His biographer Southey considers it “probably the happiest in his life,” and in this opinion most persons capable of forming a sound judgment will coincide. By far the best lines in the poet’s *Tirocinium* are those commencing—

“Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,
We love the play-place of our early days;”

in which he speaks fondly of the “innocent, sweet, simple years” of his schoolboy life; and in one of his letters, written in a genial and wholesome mood, he has words to the same effect. But in a *Memoir*, which he drew up for the private perusal of his friend Mrs Unwin, and never intended for publication, he gives a quite different account of himself at this period. There he represents himself as extremely ready to admit the suggestions of the devil, an “adept in the infernal art of lying,” and “totally depraved” in his principles. He complains that religion was so overlooked in the school that he entirely lost what little he had brought with him. This *Memoir* is one of the saddest of Cowper’s productions.

Composed under the influence of religious feelings, never of the healthiest nature, and at that particular time unusually gloomy and atrabiliar, it describes his boyish years not as they really were, guileless and glad, but as they appeared to be in the harsh judgment of a converted enthusiast, inclined to pronounce every thought and act of his former life sinful and wicked, through which there did not breathe a *conscious* piety—a piety that reflected upon, brooded over, and analysed its own religious peculiarities, and drew the lines of distinction between itself and all other spiritual conditions with pharisaic minuteness and—inaccuracy. The distortion of vision inevitable to one writing from such a point of view, deprives the Memoir of much biographical value on the points at issue, and forces us to regard it chiefly as a psychological curiosity. It is likely enough, with his peculiarly morbid temperament, that he had, even at this time, certain sallies and relapses of devotional feeling sufficient to account for the exaggerated reminiscences of his later years.

When nearly nineteen years of age he was apprenticed to a Mr Chapman, an attorney in London. This was another serious mistake. No profession was less suited for such a youth, and he seems not to have made the slightest effort to overcome his aversion to it. In Mr Chapman's office he had as fellow-clerk, Thurlow, afterwards the celebrated Lord Chancellor, and both apparently spent much of their time at the house of Cowper's uncle, Mr Ashley Cowper of Southampton Row. The poet's own words, in a letter to his cousin, Lady Hesketh, are :—"There was I and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law." In his unfortunate Memoir, however, he does not forget to complain that Mr Chapman was neglectful of the duties of religion. It is, we may say in passing, one of the least amiable traits in Cowper's religious correspondence, (characteristic, too, of that particular class of religionists among whom he lived,) that he is perpetually finding fault with the

worldliness of other people. In 1752 he left Mr Chapman's office and took chambers in the Middle Temple. It was here, when living alone, that that malady began to afflict him which subsequently produced such miserable and disastrous results. That his morbid dejection of spirits was occasionally terrible, is amply proved, but it was probably not so prolonged as he supposed. At this very time he formed an attachment to his cousin Miss Theodora Jane Cowper, (sister of Lady Hesketh,) a young lady of elegant figure and superior accomplishments; and the poems belonging to this period, especially the one written on himself, in which, describing the improved ease of his manners, he speaks of "eyeing the women," and of "making free to comment on their shapes," indicate that other thoughts and feelings at times possessed him besides those mentioned in his Memoir. Mr Ashley Cowper, however, was averse to a union between the cousins, mainly, it would appear, because his nephew had no means of keeping house. In the eyes of the vivacious Theodora, indeed, this was not a very strong objection, for when her father asked her what she would do if she married William Cowper, she gaily replied, "Do, sir? wash all day, and ride out on the great dog at night." Afterwards, when the affair was growing serious, he formally refused his consent on the ground that marriage between cousins was improper. When the lovers found it impossible to overcome his opposition, they quietly submitted to their fate—parted, and never met again in life. Theodora remained single, though she survived the poet twenty-four years; but the sincerity and depth of her affection may be imagined from the manner in which she treasured up the poems that Cowper had addressed to her, and from the constant, though secret, interest she manifested in his welfare.

In 1754 Cowper was called to the bar. It may be doubted if a more helpless creature ever went thither. Two years afterwards he lost his father, and in 1759 he removed from

the Middle to the Inner Temple. When not idling (and Cowper was very fond of dreaming away his time) he spent his hours during his residence in the Temple in classical pursuits, especially in the study of Homer, and in the company of various literary associates. He was a member of the *Nonsense Club*, established for Westminster men, and limited to seven in number. Bonnell Thornton, and Colman, editors of the *Connoisseur*, belonged to it; so did Lloyd already mentioned, son of Dr Pierson Lloyd, one of the masters of Westminster School, and afterwards Chancellor of York; but the only genuine and lasting friendship which Cowper formed with any of the members, was that with Mr Joseph Hill, the solicitor. Besides assisting his brother, the Rev. John Cowper of Cambridge, in translating several of the books of Voltaire's *Henriade*, he occasionally contributed, both prose and verse, to the *Connoisseur* and to the *St James's Magazine*, edited by Lloyd, and appears also to have renewed, in some slight degree, his acquaintance with Churchill, then in the zenith of his reputation as a satirist. But, as has been justly remarked, intimacy between two men so radically different in character and conduct was impossible. The vices of Churchill would have shocked even a less delicate and scrupulous conscience than Cowper's. The only thing they had in common was their political creed. Both were Whigs; and it is likely enough that the poet sympathised with the severity with which his old school-fellow lashed the "flagitious profligacy" of certain public personages. He speaks of him with great tenderness and immense respect.

But Cowper's slender finances were rapidly disappearing, and it soon became a matter for serious consideration what he should do to obtain a livelihood. The joint-offices of Reading Clerk and Clerk of Committees to the House of Commons becoming vacant in 1763, his kinsman, Major Cowper, the patentee of these appointments, offered them to the poet, who at once accepted them. Unhappily for

him, the House insisted on a public examination to test the fitness of the person appointed. The effect of this news upon Cowper was dreadful, and led to the most lamentable consequences. Admitting that his own account of what followed is exaggerated, and in some important particulars it has been proved to be erroneous, enough remains to convince us that it drove him headlong to insanity. After an ineffectual effort to recover his cheerfulness and sobriety of mind by a visit to Margate, he resolved to commit suicide. He has left us a painfully-minute description of his several attempts, in all of which, however, his courage fortunately failed. He was on the point of leaping into the Thames, and actually drove up to the Tower wharf for the purpose, twenty times he raised a phial of laudanum to his lips, twice he pointed a pen-knife against his heart, and thrice he tried to strangle himself with a rope—on the last occasion nearly succeeding. A sense of the enormity of his guilt at last broke in upon him. His brother hastened to his assistance. The first words of the wretched poet were, "O brother, I am damned!" It was felt necessary to remove him at once, and he was accordingly placed under the charge of Dr Cotton of St Albans, who kept an establishment there for patients of a disordered mind. The care which this good and wise physician bestowed upon Cowper had soon the most beneficial results, For a time, indeed, he became a prey to religious despair, and believed himself, as he says in some verses written during his insanity, "damned below Judas." Gradually, however, his reason returned and his health improved. At the same time his paroxysms of despair gave place to a mild and humble hope of forgiveness. He lifted his Bible again: the first verse he read was Romans iii. 25. "Immediately," he adds, "I received strength to believe." Comment upon this solemn conviction of Cowper's would be out of place, if not irreverent. *He* believed it to be the turning-point in his spiritual career—in a word, his conversion.

After a residence of eighteen months at St Albans, he

went to live at Huntingdon, a quiet place at no great distance from Cambridge, where his brother resided. His relatives, who were now convinced that the poet would never be able to do anything for himself, agreed to provide him with a moderate income. Such a position is far from satisfactory; and though Cowper's case was undoubtedly very peculiar, we cannot help thinking that he exhibited a rather unmanly facility in assenting to their kindness. It does not appear to have troubled him once in his whole life, though he occasionally refers to it in a tone of mild superficial self-upbraiding. Before leaving St Albans, he had commenced that extensive correspondence with his friends, which has resulted in our obtaining perhaps the most charming collection of letters in the English language. For ease, grace, naturalness, lively prattle, serious feeling, and good sense, they have never been surpassed. They chronicle, one may say, the daily life of Cowper, and confirm the impressions of his character and genius that we derive from his poetry.

At Huntingdon, Cowper accidentally made the acquaintance of the Unwins. This acquaintance soon ripened into the warmest friendship, and was productive of the most happy results. A more delightful family, or one better fitted for an invalid like Cowper, could not have been found. He is never weary of expatiating on their virtues. In a letter to Joseph Hill, [Oct. 25, 1765,] he thus describes them:—"He," (*i.e.*, Mr Unwin, who was clergyman of the place,) "is a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as parson Adams. His wife" (the "Mary" of Cowper's poems) "has a very uncommon understanding, has read much to excellent purpose, and is more polite than a duchess. The son, who belongs to Cambridge, is a most amiable young man, and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of the family." One can scarcely conceive what Cowper would have been without them—probably a fractious monomaniac, or "moping owl." It was their society that sweetened his life, gave free play to

his naturally amiable affections, and spread a silver lining over the sable cloud of his misfortunes. Mrs Unwin especially was the guardian angel of the troubled invalid. In November 1765 he went to board with them, a step which his inclination prompted him to adopt, but to which he was also compelled by his incapacity to manage his financial concerns. He could never keep his expenditure within his income, although his tastes were simple in the extreme. Somehow money slipped inexplicably through his fingers. In a letter [March 11, 1766] to another cousin, the wife of Major Cowper, he gives a pleasing account of the serene and pious way in which he spent his days. His mind gradually recovered its former tone, and he again displayed that mild cheerfulness and even playfulness of spirit that always marked him at his best, though it was now accompanied by a certain solemnity and devoutness of feeling, the result of his religious convictions.

The death of Mr Unwin, who was killed by a fall from his horse, in July 1767, produced a great, and, it must be admitted, unfortunate change in Cowper's mode of life. Along with Mrs Unwin he removed to Olney in Buckinghamshire. Their sole motive, we are informed, for selecting this spot as a residence, was their desire to be under the pastoral care of the Rev. John Newton. This intensely evangelical and energetic divine, who says himself in a letter to his friend Mr Thornton, that "he had a name in the country for preaching people mad," was unquestionably animated in all his conduct by the purest motives; but as Southey well observes, though Cowper could not have found a more sincere friend, he might have found a discreter one. He dragged "the man of trembling sensibilities" into a career of exciting parochial work, and even came to look upon him as his "curate," on account of the constancy of his attendance on the sick, the afflicted, and the dying; and the zeal with which, in his visitations of such, he conducted prayer. One's indignation grows hot to see how callously the *Newtonites* (if we may so designate the "right-

eous overmuch" friends of the poet who have handled this point of his life) speak of his ruined peace and health; and how fervidly, on the other hand, they describe his transports of feverish devotion. In March 1770, Cowper lost his brother, an event that affected him greatly, and probably co-operated, with the unhealthy nature of the work in which he was now engaged, to bring about a repetition of his melancholy disease. A year or two afterwards, Mr Newton induced him to take part in the composition of the well-known "Olney Hymns." Those which Cowper wrote—sixty-eight in number—are remarkably beautiful. Some of them, such as, "Oh for a closer walk with God," "Hear what God the Lord hath spoken," "There is a fountain filled with blood," "The Spirit breathes upon the Word," "'Tis my happiness below," "Far from the world, O Lord, I flee," and his last, "God moves in a mysterious way," deservedly rank among the first in the English language; but it dashes our pleasure in reading them to reflect that their composition contributed materially to hasten the catastrophe alluded to. That noble hymn, "God moves in a mysterious way," was composed in June 1773, on the very eve of his renewed insanity. A curious feature marked the approach of this second attack. He conceived a great dislike to his friend Mr Newton. It was as if some dim consciousness haunted him that the latter had something to do with his disorder. One day, however, in March, he was induced to visit him, and suddenly formed the resolution to remain. So capricious a *whirl* was, of course, only a symptom of the increase of his malady; yet, strange to say, five months were allowed to elapse before Dr Cotton was called in. By that time Cowper was quite deranged, and the old conviction had laid hold of him, with all its horrible intensity, that God had doomed him to everlasting perdition. His protracted residence at Olney put Mr Newton very much about; but both he and Mrs Unwin were unremitting in their attention to the unhappy poet. In May 1774, he was sufficiently recovered to leave, but though

no longer insane in the strict sense of the term, he continued for some years in a state of mental imbecility. To this clouded period of his history belongs the well-known incident of his domestication of the hares. He also "occupied himself in carpentry, and made cupboards, boxes, stools, and bird-cages; and found a healthy relaxation in gardening." Literature, too, mildly occupied his hours. He read, among other writing, those of Gray again, and expresses an opinion regarding that author which certainly proves the partial nature of his mental convalescence. "I think him," he says, "the only poet since Shakespeare entitled to the character of the sublime." If John Milton is not entitled to this character, it would be difficult to say who is. In 1780, Mr Newton was translated to London, having published, shortly before his departure, the *Olney Hymns*, in the preface to which he introduced Cowper to the public, and this may be considered the poet's first literary appearance. From various causes, however, these hymns did not attract much notice, and Cowper remained virtually unknown to the world of letters.

As his health improved, he began to addict himself still more to reading and writing. Some of his pleasant bagatelles were now composed, such as his *Report of an Adjudged Case, not to be found in any of the Books*, and in December 1780, on the suggestion of Mrs Unwin, he commenced the first of his longer poems—*The Progress of Error*. With what enthusiasm and constancy he pursued his new occupation, may be inferred from the fact that, in less than four months, he had finished that and three other pieces, *Truth*, *Table Talk*, and *Expostulation*, which together contain about 2500 lines. They are all conceived in a gravely religious and ethical spirit, but abound in couplets and passages of singular felicity, where something of the strength of Dryden is combined with more of the keenness of Pope. The social and moral abuses of the time are censured with a sharpness of wit and a sternness of invective hardly to be expected from a timid recluse like Cowper; and though the verses are occa-

sionally marked by a kind of serious extravagance of sentiment, the good sense which they exhibit is on the whole equal to their piety. They were published along with some other poems in 1782, but were not very favourably received—the *Critical Review* pronouncing the volume “little better than a dull sermon,” and declaring that it displayed that mediocrity which neither gods nor men can tolerate! Cowper was considerably dejected, but he felt still more acutely when no notice was taken of the copy which he sent to such of his old literary friends as were still alive, Thurlow and Colman. It is characteristic of Cowper’s way of thinking at this time, that he accounted for Thurlow’s silence by the consideration that the Chancellor had “no religion.”

During the summer of 1781, Cowper made the acquaintance of Lady Austen, widow of Sir Robert Austen. Their intercourse for some time was of the most cordial and agreeable nature. The poet (who had a great liking for the society of cultivated females) was in point of fact quite fascinated; and in his letters praises her with unusual warmth. Lady Austen appears to have deserved his panegyrics, and it must be regarded as one of Cowper’s misfortunes that anything occurred to break off their friendship. It was she who suggested to him *The Task*, and the translation of Homer, and who told him the story of John Gilpin, which the poet turned to such admirable account. Sprightly, sensible, highly accomplished, and possessing the most generous sensibilities, she was perhaps even better suited than Mrs Unwin herself to exorcise that demon of madness, ever lurking about the brain of Cowper; but his morbid love of retirement, and his equally morbid antipathy to “worldly gaiety,” together with the absorbing interest he felt in his new literary labours, appear to have led him to entertain feelings that he could not altogether conceal; and the result was a complete rupture between the lady and himself. This event took place in 1784. It is said that Lady Austen had come to regard Cowper with feelings of too great tenderness, that she ex-

pected, or at least hoped for, proposals of marriage, and that she was jealous of the influence of Mrs Unwin over him ; but though the poet entered with great facility and zest into Platonic friendships, and constantly indulged himself in the luxury of very affectionate feelings, there is not evidence to show that *his* attachment at least to "Sister Anne" was more than sisterly. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that Lady Austen thought otherwise.

The Task was published in 1785, and at once established the reputation of its author as the greatest and most original poet of his age. In some measure the way had been prepared for its favourable reception. During the previous year the ballad of *John Gilpin* had acquired an immense popularity. A celebrated actor of the time, named Henderson, had introduced it to the public of London in his recitations at Freemason's Hall. The room, we are told, was crowded upon every performance, and this success was attributed much more to John Gilpin, than to the serious part of the recitations. Mrs Siddons was present, and, "lifting her unequalled dramatic hands, clapped as heartily as she herself used to be applauded." It became the common talk, was published separately, and sold everywhere in town and country, and pictures of the redoubtable horseman "were to be seen in all the print-shops." Cowper was highly delighted ; all his correspondents congratulated him ; even the grave Mr Newton condescended to be pleased. But the main causes of the success of *The Task* are to be sought for in itself, and in the condition of English poetry at the period. Never was the Muse so silent as in the last twenty or thirty years of the eighteenth century. Pope had been long dead, and he had left no genuine successors ; Collins and Gray were also dead, and though both were possessed of an exquisitely pure genius, and may be pronounced the finest poetic artists of their age, the subjects of their verse were not calculated to awaken much interest in ordinary readers ; Goldsmith had written too little, and even that little, however sweet and natural,

was not decisively enough original to constitute him a reformer; Robert Burns indeed was alive, but his first volume did not appear until the following year, and even if it had been contemporary with *The Task*, the dialect in which he wrote was unintelligible to Englishmen; and south of the Border, in spite of his extraordinary powers, he would have been, at the time, as uninfluential for good or evil as the obscurest hack in Grub Street; the rest of Cowper's poetic contemporaries were utterly ignoble, and even their names have for the most part passed out of human remembrance. Thus he had the field entirely to himself. Of course this was not altogether an advantage. The absence of a supply in such a case argues the absence of a demand. Poets do not come to us by accident; they spring up in answer to the deep desires of a people, and if they are not found at a particular period it is because they are not then wanted. The temper of the age, so to speak, was not poetical. A singular dulness had crept over the national mind, or at least over the national sensibilities. The Church was dead asleep, and Wesley's vehement evangelisation was only a rough attempt to rouse her from her slumbers. In the country, it was the golden age of squirearchy. The peasantry were submissive and stupid; the country-gentlemen kindly, homely, and honest, as they have always been, but immersed in rural pleasures, and in many instances nearly as illiterate as the swains themselves. The town (*i.e.* London) was intolerably gay, and its dissipation unrelieved, as at present, by the counteracting influences of a wide-spread art and science. The French Revolution had to come before the hearts of men could be set on fire again and poetry deepen into a passion. Cowper had thus to encounter no small difficulties. His readers were not in a condition to vividly sympathise. But his peculiarity lay in this, that he did not make any powerful demand on their sympathies. His thoughts were neither mystical nor profound; they were not even subtle or warmly poetical. Seldom indeed has so genuine a poet pos-

sessed so poor an imagination. He was as far as possible from realising his own description of the poet :—

“ A terrible sagacity informs
The poet's heart; he looks to distant storms;
He hears the thunder ere the tempest lowers;
And arm'd with strength surpassing human powers,
Seizes events as yet unknown to man,
And darts his soul into the dawning plan.”

Collins's *Ode to the Passions*, though small in compass, in point of imaginative genius far transcends everything that Cowper wrote. Nature (whether animate or inanimate) revealed nothing to him that it did not reveal to the humblest of his readers. The plainness, even the *hardness*, of his landscape and figure painting is perfectly astonishing. Let any one study, for instance, in the *Winter Morning Walk*, (Fifth Book of *The Task*,) the poet's description of his own appearance as he moves across “the dazzling deluge” of hardened snow, and the more minute and elaborate picture of the woodman,

“ Leaving unconcern'd
The cheerful haunts of men; to wield the axe
And drive the wedge in yonder forest drear,
From morn to eve his solitary task,”—

and he will at once admit the truth of our observation. There is a total absence of those fine suggestive analogies between the outer world of appearances and the inner world of thought, the perception of which invests the former with a most mysterious beauty, and thrills the soul with an exquisite joy. “The light that never was on sea or shore,” does not once play upon his page. Even the ordinary simile, with which every poet is wont at intervals to decorate his verse, is wanting. But, on the other hand, there was a quiet unaffected love of common English scenery, of green fields, and river banks, of woodlands and leafy lanes, of domestic peace and fireside joys, in Cowper's poem that everybody could appreciate and relish, without supposing himself sentimental; and his diction was so clear, picturesque, and ner-

vous, that it was impossible to deny its charm. It was the complete opposite of the tumid splendour of Thomson's style. The versification of *The Task* had also something very attractive about it. It was quite original, and possessed a wonderful flexibility, pitched for the most part in a kind of quick-changing conversational tone, but rising often into a noble energy, and at times condensing itself, especially at the close of an animated passage, in a line of sharp ringing strength, the sound of which lingers on the ear. But it was not only the freshness and healthiness of Cowper's feeling for nature, his strong love of indoor comfort and happiness, and his power of facile rhythm, that gave *The Task* its remarkable popularity; probably to a still greater extent this was due to the religious spirit that pervades it. Whatever English society itself may be, it has a decided bias in favour of religious literature, and heartily admires those authors who are serious, moral, and pious, or who even write as if they were. It does not demand or desire mystics or transcendentalists like France and Germany, but writers of clear biblical views, strong practical convictions, and hearty in their hatred of ecclesiastical and social abuses. Such persons, if they happen to possess talent or genius, (often indeed when they have neither,) exercise a potent influence upon the middle classes of Englishmen. In this class Cowper stands pre-eminent. None has written more forcibly or pungently against the foibles, faults, and vices of his countrymen. He denounces the slave-trade, gin-drinking, fox-hunting, balls, theatres, card-playing, church-hirelings, the luxurious habits of the rich, the rude vices of the poor, the profligacy of cities, the swagger, the swearing, and the drunkenness of soldiers—quite in the style of an eloquent platform-lecturer, and one feels as if the proper conclusion to his poetic perorations on these topics was "loud applause." There is, however, a common-sense gravity and seriousness in his animadversions calculated to command respect and win approval. He is thoroughly

earnest, downright, and practical in what he says ; and to this day such lines as those in which he describes with simple dignity the genuine preacher—

“In doctrine uncorrupt; in language plain,
And plain in manner; decent, solemn, chaste,” &c.

or lashes with satiric scorn

“The things that mount the rostrum with a skip,
And then skip down again; pronounce a text;
Cry—Hem! and reading what they never wrote,
Just fifteen minutes, huddle up their work,
And with a well-bred whisper close the scene;”

are, not without reason, among the most admired and best-known in the language. The religious world found in Cowper a powerful ally, and prized him accordingly. He had just as much poetry, wit, humour, and sentiment as fitted him to illustrate without veiling in doubtful haze the truths of Christianity. There is nothing fantastic, *outré*, or heretical about him; all is as orthodox as a sermon. Before his day England had produced no great poet whose piety was of a popular kind, for Milton—the only seeming instance to the contrary—was too grandly imaginative, too richly adorned with classic learning, and too scanty in his didactic precepts, to be sincerely appreciated by the mass. Cowper occupied a far lower level, but he was for that very reason much nearer to his readers, who could understand him as easily as they did their clergyman on Sundays. Another element of attractiveness closely allied to those we have mentioned, in fact, the basis of the whole, was the intensely *English* character of his genius. It was no mere parade of patriotic feeling that made him exclaim—

“England! with all thy faults I love thee still!”

There have been many English poets who have entertained a deeper, more passionate, more tender sentiment for their native land than Cowper was capable of; but there is naturally something so broadly humane in the genius of poetry that, even where the themes are purely local, a cosmopolitan

spirit breathes out, that makes the whole world akin, as in the songs of Robert Burns. Cowper, however, has nothing of this; he is exclusively national. Except in occasional political and philanthropical allusions, he does not seem conscious that there is a world of living beings, with other ideas and aims than his, beyond the English Channel. One is keenly conscious of a certain insularity of tone in his writings, and can readily comprehend why he is not, and never will be, much cared for on the Continent. Yet this very insularity is one of his charms for English readers, and in those moods when we are weary of speculation and subtle fancies, and seek for something more simple and clear, there are few finer pleasures than listening to the quiet stream-like murmur of his muse as it passes from object to object, and from scene to scene.

One of the happiest results to Cowper personally of the publication of his new poem was the renewal of his intercourse with his relatives. This had been broken off years before by the change that had taken place in his views of life. The morbidly serious character of his correspondence, the habit of gloomy exhortation into which he had fallen; the perpetual undertone of insinuation that they were not good enough, had offended them, for it seemed under the circumstances wholly uncalled for; but *The Task*—revealing as it did so unmistakably the entire nature of the man, showing him to be essentially a sound and vigorous thinker, playful as well as truthful, warm in his social no less than in his religious feelings, and as sarcastic as any city wit—reawakened affections that were dormant but not dead. Lady Hesketh—one of the kindest and best friends the poet every had—was the first to write to him, and Cowper answered her in the most amiable spirit. Before this, and shortly after his rupture with Lady Austen, he had made the acquaintance of a family living at Weston, near Olney—the Throckmortons. They were Roman Catholics, but that did not prevent Cowper from becoming strongly attached to them. In a letter to Mr Unwin,

he says that "it is not possible to conceive a more engaging and agreeable character than the gentleman's, or a more consummate assemblage of all that is called good-nature, complaisance, and innocent cheerfulness, than is to be seen in the lady." So far did he carry his regard, that he even struck out some lines in the *Expostulation*, containing an attack on the Papacy, and substituted others in their place. In June 1786, Lady Hesketh came to Olney to pay him a visit. "I am fond of the sound of bells," says Cowper, "but was never more pleased with those of Olney than when they rang her into her new habitation." She quickly discovered that her cousin was weary of Olney, and sighed for a little of that lively intercourse with his fellow-creatures, which in his darker moods he was wont to denounce as worldly gaiety. A house was taken at Weston-Underwood, belonging to the Throckmortons, and Cowper soon became as cheerful as he had formerly been melancholy. This projected change in his mode of life, however, gave great umbrage to the Rev. Mr Newton, who, in a letter to Mrs Unwin, protested against their removal, in a way that can only be characterised as insolent in the extreme. He accused both of now leading a life unbecoming the gospel, inasmuch as they kept company with Roman Catholics, and rode occasionally in Lady Hesketh's carriage; while Cowper himself was sometimes guilty of taking a walk on Sunday, either alone or accompanied with his cousin. He doubted whether the poet was really restored to Christian privileges, and concluded by warning him that there was still intercourse between London and Olney—a shabby threat that the poet was under a pious espionage! Cowper was justly indignant; and it speaks volumes for the generosity of his friendship that he replied to this outrage in the gentlest and most courteous terms.

Cowper had scarcely been installed in his new abode, when he received news of the death of the younger Mr Unwin. Mrs Unwin bore the loss of her son with Christian fortitude, and Cowper tried to do so; but his shattered sys-

tem could not sustain the shock. His insanity returned, and once more the thought of suicide took possession of his brain. After six months he suddenly recovered—resumed his literary labours—the most important of which was his translation of Homer—and entered cheerfully into the pleasures of social intercourse. The first letter he wrote after his recovery was to his friend Samuel Rose, thanking him for a copy of Burns's poems. The kind of life led by the inmates of Weston-Underwood at this time is pleasantly sketched in a letter of Rose's to his sister Harriet, Oct. 25, 1788 :—"We rise at whatever hour we choose ; breakfast at half after nine ; take about an hour to satisfy the *sentiment* not the *appetite*, for we talk—'good heavens, how we talk !'—and enjoy ourselves most wonderfully. Then we separate, and dispose of ourselves as our different inclinations point. Mr Cowper to Homer ; Mr R. to transcribing what is already translated ; Lady Hesketh to work, and to books alternately ; and Mrs Unwin, who in everything but her face is like a kind angel sent from heaven to guard the health of our poet, is busy in domestic affairs. At one, our labours finished, the poet and I walk for two hours. . . . At three we return and dress, and the succeeding hour brings dinner upon the table, and collects again the smiling countenances of the family to partake of the neat and elegant meal. Conversation continues till tea-time, when an entertaining volume engrosses our thoughts till the last meal is announced. Conversation again, and then rest before twelve to enable us to rise again to the same round of innocent virtuous pleasure." The translation of Homer appeared in 1791, and was well received. Written in blank verse, it was, almost as a matter of course, far more literal than the glittering and sonorous paraphrase of Pope, yet cannot be said to have superseded the latter ; nor is it by any means clear that it deserves to do so. Cowper had, indeed, a truer appreciation than his predecessor of the noble simplicity and strength of the Greek ; but his resolution to be strictly literal made it impossible for him to give anything like a proper conception of its swift, melodious ma-

jesty ; hence, though Pope's music is certainly not Homer's music, it probably conveys to the unclassical reader a better idea of the power and harmony of the original than the bald and rugged version of Cowper. The poet, however, received abundant praise. Among others, his old companion Thurlow, breaking the silence of many years, opened up a correspondence with him, and declared, greatly to his delight, that he was now clearly convinced that Homer could be best translated *without* rhyme. Cowper's publisher now proposed that he should undertake an edition of Milton, which the poet consented to do, but soon grew weary of the labour of annotation, and the work was indefinitely postponed. It was, however, the means of introducing him to Hayley, (afterwards his biographer,) or rather of introducing Hayley to him. About the same time he fell into a curious delusion which one is inclined to consider a symptom of the return of his old malady. It was shared by his aged friend Mrs Unwin, now rapidly breaking down both in body and mind. Cowper began to have strange dreams, and heard voices in the night-time, whose words he noted down and sent to a belated schoolmaster named Samuel Teedon, who believed himself, and whom the poet and his Mrs Unwin also believed, to be gifted by Heaven with the power of interpreting them. At an earlier period, Cowper himself had seen through this silly oneiromantic personage, and describes himself as sweating under the grossness of his flattery ; but now, when his faculties were about to enter upon their last decay, he consulted him with pitiable earnestness. In August 1792, the poet and Mrs Unwin, who had twice suffered a paralytic shock, were persuaded by Mr Hayley to visit him at Eartham in Sussex, and for some time both seemed the better of the change of air and scene. Cowper's literary activity revived, and he and Hayley worked together on the projected edition of Milton quite vigorously. He returned to Weston in September, after which Mrs Unwin rapidly grew worse. Cowper's devotion to his old friend is exquisitely touching. The more her reason became obscured

the more exacting she became ; but the poet, who remembered the patient love with which she had tended him in his hours of agony, could only reply by increased solicitude. What deep and sorrow-laden affection swelled his bosom may be seen from his little poem *To Mary*, written while watching her life slowly settling down into night. It is a miracle of sweet, pathetic tenderness ; but Cowper could only write so feelingly when his heart was strongly stirred. In the midst of his trying work his own intellect gave way. He believed it to be his duty to inflict upon himself severe penance for his sins, and for six days he refused to taste almost any food, or to utter a single word. While in this miserable condition a letter arrived from Lord Spencer announcing that his Majesty had granted the poet a pension of £300 per annum, but it was not considered advisable to inform him of the news. In the summer of 1795 Mrs Unwin and he were removed to North Tuddenham in Norfolk, to be near Cowper's maternal relatives, the Johnsons, to whom, though his intercourse with them was of comparatively late date, he had now become extremely attached. Afterwards they took up their residence at Dunham Lodge, and finally at East Dereham in the same county, where, on the 17th of December 1795, Mrs Unwin calmly expired. After one passionate burst of grief Cowper grew calm, and never afterwards mentioned her name. He resumed in a feeble way his pen, devoting himself chiefly to a revisal of his *Homer*, which he completed about the close of 1798. The last original poem he wrote was the *Castaway*. His own works were now read to him by Mr Johnson. "He listened to them," we are told, "in silence, till they came to *John Gilpin*, which he begged not to hear." It breathed too happy a humour for poor Cowper, who was about to leave the world in that spiritual gloom which had so often shrouded his pure but morbid soul. In the beginning of 1800 symptoms of dropsy appeared, and the physician was called in, but his skill could avail nothing ; and on the afternoon of April 25, the sorely-tried and worn-out poet passed into the final rest.



What wonder, then, that health and virtue—gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all—should most abound,
And least be threaten'd, in the fields and groves.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF COWPER.

TOWN AND COUNTRY LIFE.

God made the country, and man made the town.
What wonder, then, that health and virtue—gifts
That can alone make sweet the bitter draught
That life holds out to all—should most abound,
And least be threaten'd, in the fields and groves?
Possess ye therefore, ye who, borne about
In chariots and sedans, know no fatigue
But that of idleness, and taste no scenes
But such as art contrives, possess ye still
Your element; there only can ye shine;
There only minds like yours can do no harm.
Our groves were planted to console at noon
The pensive wanderer in their shades. At eve,
The moonbeam, sliding softly in between
The sleeping leaves, is all the light they wish;
Birds warbling, all the music. We can spare
The splendour of your lamps; they but eclipse
Our softer satellite. Your songs confound
Our more harmonious notes: the thrush departs
Scared, and the offended nightingale is mute.
There is a public mischief in your mirth;
It plagues your country. Folly such as yours,
Graced with a sword, and worthier of a fan,
Has made—what enemies could ne'er have done—
Our arch of empire, steadfast but for you,
A mutilated structure, soon to fall.

THE RURAL WALK.

For I have loved the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth, close cropp'd by nibbling-sheep
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs; have loved the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by river's brink,
E'er since a truant boy, I pass'd my bounds,
T' enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames;
And still remember, nor without regret,
Of hours, that sorrow has since much endear'd,
How oft, my slice of pocket store consumed,
Still hungering, penniless, and far from home,
I fed on scarlet hips and stony haws,
Or blushing crabs, or berries, that enboss
The bramble, black as jet, or sloes austere.

Hard fare ! but such as boyish appetite
 Disdains not, nor the palate, undepraved
 By culinary arts, unsavoury deems.

THOUGHTS ON NATURE.

HAPPY, if full of days,—but happier far,
 If, ere we yet discern life's evening star,
 Sick of a service of a world that feeds
 Its patient drudges with dry chaff and weeds,
 We can escape from Custom's idiot sway,
 To serve the Sovereign we were born t' obey.
 Then sweet to muse upon His skill display'd
 (Infinite skill) in all that He has made !
 'To trace, in Nature's most minute design,
 The signature and stamp of power divine ;
 Contrivance intricate, express'd with ease,
 Where unassisted sight no beauty sees.
 The shapely limb, and lubricated joint,
 Within the small dimensions of a point,
 Muscle and nerve miraculously spun,
 His mighty work, who speaks and it is done,
 The Invisible, in things scarce seen reveal'd,
 To whom an atom is an ample field :
 To wonder at a thousand insect forms,
 These hatch'd, and those resuscitated worms,
 New life ordain'd and brighter scenes to share,
 Once prone on earth, now buoyant upon air ;
 Whose shape would make them, had they bulk and size,
 More hideous foes than fancy can devise ;
 With helmet-heads and dragon-scales adorn'd,
 The mighty myriads, now securely scorn'd,
 Would mock the majesty of man's high birth,
 Despise his bulwarks, and unpeople earth :
 Then with a glance of fancy to survey,
 Far as the faculty can stretch away,
 Ten thousand rivers pour'd at His command,
 From urns that never fail, through every land ;
 These like a deluge with impetuous force,
 Those winding modestly a silent course ;
 The cloud-surmounting Alps, the fruitful vales ;
 Seas on which every nation spreads her sails ;
 The sun, a world whence other worlds drink light ;
 The crescent moon, the diadem of night ;
 Stars countless, each in his appointed place,
 Fast anchor'd in the deep abyss of space :
 At such a sight to catch the poet's flame,
 And with a rapture like his own exclaim,
 These are Thy glorious works, Thou Source of good !
 How dimly seen, how faintly understood !
 Thine, and upheld by Thy paternal care,
 This universal frame, thus wondrous fair ;

Thy power divine, and bounty beyond thought,
 Adored and praised in all that Thou hast wrought,
 Absorb'd in that immensity I see,
 I shrink abased, and yet aspire to Thee;
 Instruct me, guide me to that heavenly day,
 Thy words, more clearly than Thy works, display,
 That, while Thy truths my grosser thoughts refine,
 I may resemble Thee, and call Thee mine!

GRATITUDE TO GOD.

How blest Thy creature is, O God,
 When, with a single eye,
 He views the lustre of Thy word,
 The dayspring from on high.

Through all the storms that veil the skies,
 And frown on earthly things,
 The Sun of Righteousness he eyes
 With healing on His wings.

Struck by that light, the human heart,
 A barren soil no more,
 Sends the sweet smell of grace abroad,
 Where serpents lurk'd before.

The glorious orb, whose golden beams
 The fruitful year control,
 Since first, obedient to Thy word,
 He started from the goal,

Has cheer'd the nations with the joys
 His orient rays impart;
 But, Jesus, 'tis Thy light alone
 Can shine upon the heart.

RELIGION NOT ADVERSE TO PLEASURE.

RELIGION does not censure or exclude
 Unnumber'd pleasures harmlessly pursued;
 To study, culture, and with artful toil
 To meliorate and tame the stubborn soil;
 To give dissimilar yet fruitful lands
 The grain, or herb, or plant that each demands;
 To cherish virtue in an humble state,
 And share the joys your bounty may create;
 To mark the matchless workings of the power
 That shuts within its seed the future flower:
 Bids these in elegance of form excel,
 In colour these, and those delight the smell;
 Sends Nature forth, the daughter of the skies,
 To dance on earth, and charm all human eyes:

To teach the canvas innocent deceit,
 Or lay the landscape on the snowy sheet—
 These, these are arts pursued without a crime,
 That leave no stain upon the wing of Time.

ODE TO PEACE.

COME, peace of mind, delightful guest !
 Return, and make thy downy nest
 Once more in this sad heart :
 Nor riches I, nor power pursue,
 Nor hold forbidden joys in view ;
 We therefore need not part.

Where wilt thou dwell if not with me,
 From avarice and ambition free,
 And pleasure's fatal wiles ?
 For whom, alas ! dost thou prepare
 The sweets that I was wont to share,
 The banquet of thy smiles ?

The great, the gay, shall they partake
 The heaven that thou alone canst make ?
 And wilt thou quit the stream
 That murmurs through the dewy mead,
 The grove and the sequester'd shade,
 To be a guest with them ?

For thee I panted, thee I prized,
 For thee I gladly sacrificed
 Whate'er I loved before ;
 And shall I see thee start away,
 And helpless, hopeless, hear thee say—
 Farewell, we meet no more ?

THE CHRISTIAN'S ENJOYMENT OF THE WORKS OF NATURE.

HE looks abroad into the varied field
 Of Nature, and, though poor perhaps compared
 With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
 Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
 His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
 And the resplendent rivers. His t' enjoy
 With a propriety that none can feel,
 But who, with filial confidence inspired,
 Can lift to Heaven an unassuming eye,
 And smiling say—"My Father made them all !"
 Are they not his by a peculiar right,
 And by an emphasis of int'rest his,
 Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
 Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
 With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
 That plann'd, and built, and still upholds, a world
 So clothed with beauty for rebellious man ?



Epe

POPE.

MORE controversy, the most of it now happily forgotten, has gathered round the name of Pope, than round that of any poet whatever, ancient or modern, if we except Homer, with whom Pope has become inalienably associated in the popular imagination by his justly-admired versions of the two great Homeric poems. In his own lifetime, and long after his death, he was the undisputed sovereign of the realms of rhyme; and it was not till about the beginning of the present century that his pre-eminence was questioned by Bowles, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others, some of whom virtually, if not expressly, denied that he was a poet at all! Byron, on the other hand, with characteristic exaggeration, ranked him nearly as high as Shakspeare,—his enmity to Bowles and “the rest,” perhaps, even more than his admiration of Pope, heightening his estimate of the great satirist. Now, however, his claims as one of the foremost English poets, the first without dispute in his own walk, have been established on a rational basis, and are universally admitted.

Alexander Pope was born on the 21st of May 1688, in Lombard Street, London, where his father was a wholesale linen-draper. Both his parents were of the Catholic persuasion, the mother by inheritance from her family, and his father by conversion during a residence at Lisbon. As there is some reason to believe that he was the son of a Hampshire clergyman, and as his library consisted for the most part of works

in polemical theology, it may be charitably inferred that this adoption of a new form of faith resulted neither from ignorance nor caprice. Having acquired a considerable fortune by trade, £20,000 says Dr Johnson, a very handsome sum in those days, he retired first to Kensington and then to Binfield, a small estate which he had purchased in Windsor Forest. As a Catholic liable to pains and penalties, he was afraid to trust his money in Government or other securities, and kept it by him in a chest, from which he took as occasion required the sums necessary to support his family. An inevitable consequence of this was the gradual disappearance of stock; and we find Pope complaining that, before he realised the subscriptions for the *Iliad*, he was too poor to purchase books.

The poet delighted to represent himself as "of gentle blood," and no doubt he was by the side of his mother, the daughter of an opulent Yorkshire landowner of the name of Turner. Part of her dowry consisted of a rentcharge of £70 on the manor of Ruston, which after the death of both his parents descended to Pope. But when he informs us that his father was of a family of which the Earl of Downe was head, he appears to be in some measure the victim of vanity or misinformation, for if he was of the same family with the Popes who were ennobled in 1628, the relationship must have dated two hundred years before his birth, when the Popes were but simple Oxfordshire yeomen.

As his filial feelings were of uncommon strength, nothing irritated him more than the slanders on the obscurity of his birth, industriously circulated by Moore, Duckett, Welsted, Bentley, and others, noteless pamphleteers for Curll. His father was said to be a mechanic, a hatter, a farmer, a bankrupt. Of these he took no immediate notice:—

"Full ten years slandered did he once reply?" But when they were reproduced by persons so considerable as Lord Hervey, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, he was goaded to defence and retaliation in the Prologue to the *Satires*, and in

a letter to a noble lord. "Of gentle blood," he says, "each parent sprung." "As to my father, I could assure you, my lord, that he was no mechanic, (neither a hatter, nor, which might please your lordship yet better, a cobbler,) but in truth, of a very tolerable family. And my mother of an ancient one, as well born and educated as that lady whom your lordship made choice of to be the mother of your own children."

The family being Catholic, it was impossible for young Pope to be educated at any of the great public schools without submitting to intolerable humiliation, and accordingly his education commenced under the paternal roof, an old aunt teaching him to read, and also to write, by copying printed books. The titlepage of a juvenile exercise of his written in this way, was executed with so much excellence, that one who saw it says it required close inspection to distinguish it from typography. When about eight years old he was placed under a priest named Banister, who set out with the idea of teaching him Latin and Greek together. "After having been under that priest about a year," says he, "I was sent to the seminary at Twyford, and then to a school by Hyde Park corner; and with the two latter masters lost what little I had got under my first. About twelve I went with my father into the Forest, and there learned for a few months under a fourth priest. This was all the teaching I ever had; and God knows, it extended a very little way." The *ruling passion*, to use a favourite expression of his own, developed itself within him at a very early age; for while at the Twyford seminary, he lampooned his master, and was in consequence brutally flogged. This, his first known attempt at satire, procured for him severe physical sufferings, the precursors and earnest of those more acute mental pangs entailed on him by the satiric effusions of his manhood.

By the weakness or indulgence of his father, he was left while a mere boy to educate himself—a course of questionable propriety even in his case, and to be deprecated in almost every other. He took to reading with great eagerness and

enthusiasm, and delighted especially in poetry. He skimmed the surface of a great number of English, French, Latin, and Greek poets, merely for the stories to be found in them, and without any serious intention of acquiring the languages. Metrical versions of the ancient poets were then much read,—Ovid, Juvenal, &c., *done into English by eminent hands*, constituting a very considerable proportion of the publications of that day; and some of Pope's earliest efforts were versions of passages of Ovid and Statius into English heroics. His father accidentally stimulated his poetic proclivities by prescribing him subjects, and forcing him to correctness by repeated revisals. For five or six years he read with extraordinary assiduity, but without system, following where fancy led; and these years he always looked back upon as the happiest of his life. He thought himself the better in some respects for having had no regular education, having read originally for the sense, in contradistinction to the general practice of reading so many years only for words. But even in the case of Pope with his strong sense, unwearied application, tenacious memory, and insatiable thirst for knowledge, De Quincey, a most competent authority on scholastic matters, after rigidly testing his acquirements, has put on record this deliberate judgment:—"The result, therefore, of Pope's self-tuition appears to us, considered in the light of an attempt to acquire certain accomplishments of knowledge, a most complete failure."

Before he was twelve years old he was so much struck with Dryden's numbers, that he prevailed on some friend to carry him to "glorious John's" head-quarters at Will's coffee-house in Russel Street, and thus were brought into momentary juxtaposition, though unconsciously on one side, the rising and the setting suns of British poesy in that age. "I learned versification wholly from Dryden's works, who had improved it much beyond any of our former poets, and would probably have brought it to its perfection, had he not been unhappily obliged to write so often in haste."

The fame of the studious cripple of Windsor Forest was of rapid growth. While yet a boy, he was on terms of the closest intimacy with men of rank and letters, some old enough to be his grandfather, but all treating him with marked deference and respect; with his neighbour Sir William Trumbull, who had been secretary of state to William the Third, and ambassador at Constantinople, and who was, besides, one of the best read men of the day; with Walsh, gentleman of the horse in Anne's reign, and, as Dryden thought, the best critic of his time; with Wycherly, the old boy of wit and pleasure upon town, the battered beau, who in the noon of his fame and manly beauty, had been the favoured lover of a royal mistress; with Cromwell, the fox-hunting rake of the tie-wig, from whom he learned that unpleasantly sarcastic and slighting manner of speaking of the fair sex of which he never got rid, and which sits so ill on the little invalid. And these intimacies, be it remembered, were formed long before he appeared conspicuously as an author, on the faith merely of brilliant promise, and of a foreshadowing of great powers by some juvenile productions which had been submitted to the judgment of a few persons of taste. One of these pieces, "The Ode to Solitude," was written before he was twelve years old; for like many weakly decrepit people, Pope's powers were unusually precocious. His "Pastorals," the most worthless of all his works, though written when he was sixteen, were not published till 1709, when he was twenty-one, while his correspondence with Wycherly opens in 1704, with Sir William Trumbull in 1705; and in the same year Walsh, on returning the "Pastorals" to Wycherly, after stating that "'tis no flattery at all to say, that Virgil had written nothing so good at his age," adds, "I shall take it as a favour if you bring me acquainted with him." In 1709, then, the "Pastorals" appeared in *Tonson's Miscellany*. The road to success had been paved for him by influential friends. The sole merit of the Pastorals, however, lies in the versification, of which he appears to have been a master from

the very first; for though they shew wonderful reading for one so young, and great powers of language, they are untrue to nature, and exhibit no originality of treatment, and no invention. The "Essay on Criticism" was published in 1711, a work over-estimated at the time, but a brilliant example of argument conducted in verse, abounding in poetic trick and artifice, and laying down canons frequently violated in the poem itself. It is an extraordinary work for a youth of twenty to have produced, and in it he first firmly trode on his own peculiar domain, that, namely, of the didactic in verse. "I admired Mr Pope's essay at first very much," writes Lady Mary W. Montagu, after her little difference with the poet, one may be sure, "because I had not then read any of the ancient critics, and did not know that it was all stolen." The essay was warmly praised by Addison in the *Spectator*, but denounced with insane fury by Dennis, who fancied that his person was lampooned in these lines—

"But Appius reddens at each word you speak,
And stares, tremendous, with a threatening eye,
Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry."

About the same time, at the suggestion of Mr Caryl, and to reconcile the families of Miss Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre, whose friendly intercourse had been interrupted by the furtive appropriation of one of Miss Fermor's tresses by Lord Petre, her lover, Pope wrote what by some is considered the best of all his poems, "The Rape of the Lock." Johnson, generally a niggard of his praise, describes it "as the most airy, the most ingenious, and the most delightful of all his compositions." It was published originally in two cantos. In opposition to the advice of Addison, and with contemptuous disregard of all former experience, Pope risked a recasting and expansion of the poem to five cantos by the introduction of the machinery of sylphs, gnomes, and nymphs, figments of the Rosicrucian philosophy. This hazardous attempt succeeded to a miracle, and elicits from the lexicographer this further eulogium:—"The Rape of

the *Lock*' stands forward in the classes of literature as the most exquisite example of ludicrous poetry;"—a eulogium repeated in terms nearly identical by De Quincey, who regards the addition of the sylphs and gnomes as the principle of its vitality. Pope regarded Addison's advice as the offspring of jealousy, but unjustly; for any attempt seriously to modify an approved artistic effort is needlessly dangerous. Of the poem in its enlarged form, Pope was very proud. He said to Spence, "'The Rape of the Lock' was written fast; all the machinery, you know, was added afterwards; and the making that and what was published before hit so well together, is, I think, one of the greatest proofs of judgment of any thing I ever did."

In 1713, at the request of Lord Lansdowne, to whom the poem is dedicated, he published his "*Windsor Forest*," the earlier part of which had been written in 1704 at the same time with the "*Pastorals*," and the remainder in the year of publication. In this poem, more than in any other, Pope indulges in descriptions of external nature, and discovers powers of minute observation and picturesque presentment of outward phenomena, which were afterwards kept in abeyance or employed in the rehabilitation of historical incidents, or in limning in brilliant and unfading colours the fleeting and fantastic phases of social life and morals. Of his other juvenile productions, it will suffice to mention the "*Temple of Fame*," written when he was twenty-two, of which the hint was taken from Chaucer's "*House of Fame*;" "*Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Young Lady*;" "*Eloisa to Abelard*;" and some translations and imitations. The "*Elegy*" and "*Eloisa*" are almost the only pieces in which he rises into the higher regions of passion.

He was now, beyond dispute, supreme among his contemporaries, the claims of Addison, even as a poet, being felt to be inferior. From what is known of Addison's character, we cannot suppose that he beheld this sudden elevation of a younger rival to poetic supremacy with perfect equanimity;

but that he had as yet been guilty of any overt act of hostility there is no just reason to believe. If Pope was unrivalled in his own walk, so was Addison in another, and as high a walk. Addison's little senate, we may well suppose, felt more galled by the poetic eclipse of their chief than did the great Cato himself. But Pope was now considerable enough to have satellites of his own, who taught him to believe that if Cato did not himself openly undervalue him, if he did not encourage, he at least permitted his senate at Button's to do it ; nay, that so eager was he to be the first name in current literature, that Steele and he used to underrate even Dryden. But Lady Mary W. Montagu, by no means friendly to Pope, denies that there was anything like two parties, one to elevate Pope and the other Addison, to the pontificate of poesy in those times. "It was a thing," she says, "that could not bear any dispute."

Be this as it may, for a considerable time there was apparent cordiality between these great men. We have seen that Addison commended the "Essay on Criticism" in the *Spectator*, and rated the original form of the "Rape of the Lock" so high, calling it "a delicious little thing," that he tried to dissuade Pope from his intended recasting of it. This Pope took highly amiss, though there is no reason to doubt that the counsel was well-meant. When Addison had finished his "Cato," he brought it to Pope, and left it with him for three or four days, requesting his sincere opinion of it. Pope, with perfect honesty, advised him against bringing it on the stage, as, though delightful in the closet, it wanted that dramatic interest and suitableness for theatric representation necessary to insure its certain success with the play-going public ; Addison's own opinion coincided with Pope's, but some particular friends, whom he could not disoblige, insisted on its being acted ; and acted it was, with extraordinary success, Pope himself having furnished it with one of the finest prologues ever written.

Despite this seeming cordiality, matters between them were

on the razor's edge, and a circumstance now occurred which pointed to a rupture, though it did not actually produce one. Poor old John Dennis published some disparaging remarks on "Cato," and Pope, who had already lampooned Dennis in the "Essay on Criticism," replied in the "Narrative of the Frenzy of John Dennis." Macaulay, always unjust to Pope, says, "The appearance of the remarks on 'Cato' gave the irritable poet an opportunity of venting his malice under the show of friendship; and such an opportunity could not but be welcome to a nature which was always implacable in enmity, and which always preferred the tortuous to the straight path." That the "Narrative" was injudicious, reprehensible in spirit, and unworthy of Pope's powers and position, must be frankly acknowledged; but that it proceeded from malice is a supposition entirely gratuitous. In Pope's eyes it was a mere *jeu d'esprit*. To involve himself in the quarrels of his friends was quite a notable feature in his character, his warmth of heart impelling him to their defence too often with culpable recklessness. Incensed at his rash and unsolicited interference, Addison commissioned Steele to inform the unhappy critic that he had no hand in the "Narrative," that he disapproved of it, and that should he choose to answer him it would be after quite another fashion. Pope, finding his well-meant services disavowed, was offended in his turn. Still, the coldness between them might have been easily removed had matters remained exactly as they were, but Addison's disingenuous procedure with regard to Pope's translation of the Iliad drew down upon him a castigation which he could never forget, and which rendered further intercourse impossible between the author of it and one so proud and stately, so accustomed to reverential deference and to the exercise of a mild and decorous despotism. We have been thus particular respecting the coldness which arose between them, because we have now come down to that period of Pope's life, to him a most critical one, in which he fairly set himself to the task of translating Homer,

a task which he at first feared to be above his powers, and which he believed Addison had malignantly exerted himself to the utmost limits of his influence to render nugatory.

For a full discussion of this point, and of others relative to the translation of Homer, the reader is referred to the prefatory remarks to Pope's Homer in the present series of English poets. Meanwhile, suffice it to say that his Homeric labours extended over a period of twelve years, from 1713 to 1725; that he realised by them a fortune of above eight thousand pounds; that his Iliad seems to exhibit the utmost that our language is capable of in splendour of versification; and that despite its many shortcomings as a faithful transcription of the old Greek life and spirit, it is the only version of "the tale of Troy divine" which retains a firm, and apparently a permanent hold on readers of all classes of our countrymen.

His father sold Binfield in 1715, and shortly after, in 1717, died at Chiswick. The subscriptions for Homer had made Pope a man of no small wealth; and having leased a villa and grounds at Twickenham, which it was his pleasure to adorn, and his weakness to talk too much of, he removed his household gods thither, and there resided till his death. His aged mother, for whom his affection was sincere and absorbing, found there, during the remainder of her life, a home blessed by the unremitting assiduities of the most dutiful of sons, whom she saw honoured as the first poet of his time, as the favourite of the great, the noble, the learned, the witty, the gay, the fair—the centre of a group of friends the most faithful, the most disinterested, the least exacting and jealous, that universal literature offers for our admiration, and all of them with a kindly word to, or a kindly inquiry for, the mother, whom Pope tended with a graceful and touching devotion. To name his friends is to recall the ornaments of that age, men of world-wide fame,—Atterbury, Bolingbroke, Garth, Gay, Oxford, Peterborough, Swift, Arbuthnot. The letters of these friends to Pope, and his letters

to them, are delightful reading. One fault only jars upon the sensibilities of modern readers. It is the exclusiveness of these great men. They were all the world to each other ; out of the sacred and too circumscribed pale virtue and worth are not readily recognised by them, and what their affection gains in intensity is purchased by illiberal narrowness.

In 1721 Pope engaged to edit Shakspeare, a task for which he was unfit, from his want of the requisite knowledge of the literature of the Elizabethan era. It was published in 1725, with a preface by Pope of much value, which attracted attention to the works of the great dramatist, then less studied than they have been ever since. His deficiencies as an editor were exposed by Theobald, on whom Pope took ample vengeance in the *Dunciad*. But he gained little fame by his editorial work, and, considering the labour of collation and of composing the admirable preface, not much of fortune, as his remuneration, according to tradition, was only £217.

In 1723 Bishop Atterbury was tried for high treason, and banished. This was a heavy blow to Pope, who was examined upon his trial ; and though he had merely to answer a few questions as to the course of life and conversation at Bromley, notwithstanding his desire to give such evidence as should benefit his friend, he said little, and blundered in the few words he uttered. In 1727, in conjunction with Swift, he published the *Miscellanies*, among them the famous "Art of Sinking in Poetry," which drew forth numberless libels and lampoons, aimed exclusively at Pope, and gave rise to those quarrels which occasioned the "*Dunciad*," the greatest of all his works, and the noblest monument of satiric power that genius has ever reared. Atterbury died in 1732, Gay in the same year, and the next year the mother whom he loved so well. He never completely recovered his cheerfulness. Swift now was as good as dead to him. His anticipations of insanity were too soon realised, and he with-

drew from London, and from the society of his literary and political friends, to die like a poisoned rat in a hole. A piratical edition of Pope's letters, by Curll, caused him much uneasiness, and he requested his friends to return his correspondence with them. All complied save Swift, who seems to have been in the hands of those who were willing to avail themselves of his miseries to become the sharers of his literary confidences. In 1733 the "Essay on Man" was published, and the serious business of his life was now the further extension of that poem into a course of ethical philosophy. As a system of philosophy, however, it is defective, exhibiting, in different places, contradictory and opposite theories, and throughout a shallow eclecticism, with no determining principle, towards which all the reasoning and illustrations should gravitate. It contains, however, noble passages of incident and sentiment, harmoniously blended. His moral writings are read now only for their splendid imagery and illustrations, their terse and nervous diction, and their brilliant versification. The "Dunciad," in three books, with Theobald for its hero, had been published in 1728, but in 1742 he published a fourth book, and the year following a new edition of the whole work, in which Colley Cibber was raised to that painful eminence. This was a blunder, as Cibber was a man of lively parts, and possessed sense, wit, and humour, by no means the qualifications that would recommend him to the Goddess of Dulness. It requires considerable acquaintance with the private history and literary gossip of the period for a modern reader fully to understand and appreciate the "Dunciad;" and one is apt to wonder at the lavish expenditure of wrath and poetic power on objects so insignificant. They would have descended quietly into oblivion had they not been preserved in the amber of Pope's immortal verse. He hunts down vermin with ruthless vigour, and, amid unrivalled power and felicity of execution, he leaves on the mind of the reader an impression of implacable malignity altogether foreign to his character. He

merely desired to do thoroughly whatever he engaged in. Though he flogged Dennis with what seems terrible severity, he did the old man many kindnesses. And dreadful as were the wounds he gave, he suffered more than his victims. So susceptible was he, that the dullest dunce in Grub Street could cut him to the quick. This weakness he tried to conceal; but those who saw his countenance after reading some stupid slander have described it as expressing exquisite torture.

Some of these slanders were silly enough. For example, Dennis says:—"Mr Pope is an open and mortal enemy to his country and the commonwealth of learning. Some call him a Popish Whig, which is directly inconsistent. Pope, as a Papist, must be a Tory and Highflyer. He is a Popish writer bred up with a contempt of the sacred writings. His religion allows him to destroy heretics, not only with his pen but with fire and sword; and such were all those unhappy wits whom he sacrificed to his accursed Popish principles. It deserved vengeance to suggest that Mr Pope had less infallibility than his namesake at Rome." Such were the amenities of literature in the early part of the eighteenth century, such the compliments that passed between authors who had lived and flourished in the days of Anne, the Augustan era of English letters! No writer would now pollute his pen with them, no publisher would now give them to the world. But there was a lower deep still. Pope was nicknamed an ape, an ass, a frog, a coward, a knave, a fool, a thing. "Let us take the initial letter of his Christian name and the initial and final letter of his surname—viz., A. P. E, and they give you the same idea of an ape as his face. It is my duty to pull off the lion's skin from this little ass. A squab, short gentleman—a little creature that, like the frog in the fable, swells, and is angry that it is not allowed to be as big as an ox—a lurking, waylaying coward—one whom God and nature have marked for want of common honesty—a little abject thing." All this is so undignified,

so childish, so dunce-like, that Pope might very well have forborne to notice it. But he was eminently sensitive; he had been so made of and coddled at home, and wherever he went, by one and all, that the slightest failure in respect, not to speak of such wholesale defamation, roused all his ire.

The loss in rapid succession of his nearest and dearest friends, with the superadded annoyance of the stings of those hornets which the satire of the "Dunciad" brought upon him in swarms, fretted him excessively, and he was conscious that he was rapidly breaking up. He set about giving the last finish to his works, in which he was assisted by Warburton. His remaining friends gathered round him, and it is pleasant to know that his last days were spent in calmness and composure. His disease was dropsy of the chest. He dined in company two days before he died; and the day preceding his death, he took an airing on Blackheath. His mental powers were sometimes obscured by delirium, but his humanity and goodness suffered not even the most momentary eclipse. Bolingbroke was so affected that he broke down in speaking of his kindness and warmth of heart. On the 30th of May 1744, at the age of fifty-six, he breathed his last, and so quietly that the moment of his decease could not be distinguished.

His personal character was either over or under rated during his lifetime. He was naturally one-sided, and his friendships and dislikes were intense. But he was generous, affectionate, and grateful. He delighted in refined society, especially in that of accomplished females, and his manners were singularly elegant. He was accused of parsimony, but his expenditure had been limited to preserve his independence. He was no great man's parasite, but "pleased by manly ways." His greatest fault was his vanity. He was extremely self-conscious. He was afraid that his letters would be opened at the post-office, where it is likely his handwriting was unknown. He was afraid to inscribe, "O Rare Bounce!" on the tombstone of a favourite dog, lest the

world should cry out that the famous Mr Pope was having a fling at Ben Jonson. He may have been chargeable sometimes with duplicity and petty manœuvring, but on the whole he was a brave and kindly man.

A good deal has been written about his versification. He was the perfecter of the heroic couplet—the favourite measure of the period, and exquisitely adapted to didactic and satirical compositions, in which precisely lay his strength. In the exquisite finish of his verse alone does he excel his master Dryden. This has been called a merely mechanical excellence; and to some extent it is. But though the trick was soon learned, it required genius to invent and perfect it. The greatest defect to modern ears in Pope's verse is the monotony of the pauses and the too frequent finishing of the sense at the close of every second line. His rhymes are often incorrect. For this and for his lavish use of triplets he was censured by Swift. Open his works at a venture, and we find *fault* rhyming always as if it sounded *faut*, *obliged* sounds *obleeged*, which may have been the pronunciation of the period, *sphere* rhymes to *there*, *stay* to *sea*, which is surely an Hibernicism; *scene* to *men*, *revere* to *star*, and so on.

What place does Pope occupy as a poet? He is not to be classed with Shakspeare and Milton. He wants the universality of the one and the sublimity of the other. He does not look out on man and nature with the calm and loving and all-embracing sympathy of Shakspeare, nor, like Milton, can he sweep with supreme dominion the realms of light and darkness and chaos. The invisible world reveals to him but sylphs and gnomes, who agitate themselves about the tresses of a lady. A Hamlet, an Othello, a Portia, a Desdemona, he never could have evoked from the depths of his consciousness. A Satan was above and beyond his range. Had he represented Eden, it would have been clipped and trimmed like his grounds at Twickenham. But no poet of any age or clime is his equal as an observer and critic of

artificial life and manners, of the frailties and foibles of society, of virtue and vice as exhibited in a highly-civilised and somewhat *petit-maitre* community. In his ethics he is a professor with a theory, and in expounding it he is not always consistent. In his satire he is ruthless and of seeming implacability. He brings to his work, whatever it may be, a weapon of the finest point, a wrist firm and supple, an eye that notes with an instinct like inspiration every flaw in an adversary's mail, and—the wound is given, and bleeds immortally.

But Pope occupies a very high niche in the temple of English poesy. As a conductor of an argument in rhyme, he has no equal, and no second. In his own peculiar walk he is unrivalled. Within that circle none dares tread but he. Grave objections were urged against his claims as a poet of a high rank, chiefly on the score of his untruthfulness to nature—that is, by an arbitrary limitation of the term to external nature—when he attempts description. Wordsworth said that a blind man who had merely noted attentively the ordinary conversation of his neighbours could easily convict him of inaccuracy in this respect. But this is gross exaggeration. In his "Windsor Forest," and in the "Temple of Fame," as well as in many passages of his other works, original and translated, we have descriptive poetry as truthful as it is beautiful. But is nothing within the category of nature but mountain, lake, and sea, atmospheric phenomena, Lucy Grays, Alice Fells, and "the dear waggoners around the lakes?" In every highly-civilised community, as history shews us, there arrives naturally a period, after the earnest heroic souls who have established the national greatness, and determined the national character, have gone to their rest, when life becomes less real, when manners usurp the place of morals, when rakes and dandies inherit the names, and sit in the halls of patriots of austere virtue and historic renown. Then, by an inevitable law, the satirist comes on the stage, and performs a duty, a necessary,

though an invidious one, which, despite the noble rage of Cowper, could not be so well performed by the pulpit. In Wordsworth's exquisite "We are Seven," the character of "the little maiden" is felt to be nature in one of its simplest and most touching manifestations; but though Pope generally exhibited character as operating through manners, less interesting, less natural, in a limited sense of the term, still his pictures are true and masterly, and represent no mere figment of his brain, but what came daily under his observation. We may censure his choice of a subject, but we are compelled to admire his delineation of it. And what must not be overlooked in an estimate of Pope's poetic standing, he is the last of our poets, with the exception of Byron, who is thoroughly English; and it may be long before we have another bard possessing the same vigour and terseness, and perfect mastery of our noble and expressive language. We can easily imagine that Pope will be read with delight, when many of our sweet singers, prating continually of nature, and twitting the admirers of Pope with his artificialness, will have been entirely forgotten, or banished to the corners and upper shelves of our libraries, to be worm-eaten in company with Hammond, and Broome, and Fenton, and Tickell, and Savage, and Philips.

In judging of his poetry we must keep out of view our own predilections and the favourite forms and subjects of the Muse of our own day, and ascertain as nearly as possible the standard of taste and excellence which obtained in *his* time, and to which he must always have had reference in preparing his works for the public eye. We must also consider how far he has succeeded in realising his own ideal, and not whether that was the noblest or highest ideal, or one likely to find acceptance with a great original poet of our times. In the early decades of the eighteenth century, satire was the most effective weapon in the poet's armoury, and Pope wielded it like one "to the manner born." As a satirist, he had special qualifications. Nature had been

unkind enough to make sardonic observation and criticism of his kind not quite unbecoming for him. He had studied Horace with great love and appreciation, as is evidenced by his matchless imitations of the Venusian bard—a satirist mild and genial, however, who tickled where Pope smote. A healthy man of good digestion, the favourite of Augustus and his minister, with fortune full in his sails, whereas Pope was deformed, dyspeptic, under Catholic disabilities, and a close friend of disappointed deans, of banished bishops, and discarded statesmen. And it can hardly be doubted that his sense of physical weakness was soothed by his power to impale on the barbed shafts of his satire, and hold up for everlasting derision whomsoever he would. In Swift he found a congenial spirit, who urged him now and again to give the world “one lash more.” But he overdid his task, and even Swift, in the view of Pope’s fame, fortunes, happy home, and “troops of friends,” was forced to rebuke him for his spurious misanthropy. In Swift’s bitterness there was no affectation. He confesses that he hates the world. He may love John, Peter, Thomas, but he most cordially detests that animal called man. As early as 1722, Atterbury had encouraged Pope to cultivate satire as a walk in which he was fitted to excel. The advice, judicious as it was, was gratuitous, for Pope knew well where his strength lay, and how to use it to the best advantage. The noble Arbuthnot, the most reputable of all his friends, in a beautiful letter written shortly before his death, with great judgment and gentleness gives him this caution:—“And I make it my last request, that you will continue that noble disdain and abhorrence of vice which you seem naturally endued with, but still with a due regard to your own safety; and study more to reform than to chastise, though the one cannot be effected without the other.”

There is no vital link between Pope’s works and Christianity. We look upon him and his friends as we would upon a conclave of noble heathens, with all the virtues, and

graces, and charities of life, but just as these might have existed in Socrates, Alcibiades, Virgil, or Seneca. A better Christian than any of them might have been picked out from the heathen world—one with more self-denial, more active virtue, a larger-hearted humanity, and more Christ-like sympathies. We assert this simply as it has occurred to us in forming an estimate of Pope and his environment, without any reference to sect or creed. There was a nobility of character about him which transcends the comprehension of many who deem themselves, and are deemed, exemplary Christians. For had he consented to profess the Protestant form of Christianity, there would have been an obstacle,—not an insuperable one to his enjoyment of a pension,—but an obstacle removed from the path of preferment, and place and power would have easily been within his reach. But he would not have turned his coat for a coronet. And be it remembered that he had no conviction of the superiority of Catholicism as an expression of doctrine and worship. His faith in it was weak and inoperative as a rule of life, and in his own mind the Church of Rome was not a hair's-breadth above the Church of England. But he was courageous and honest, and valued a consistent manly life more than wealth and honours.

Any one acquainted with the literature of Greece and Rome will understand at once what is meant by this pagan spirit we find in Pope. After lengthened intercourse with the ancient classics, everybody but a grammarian is fain to turn aside and refresh himself at the sacred fountains of Christian lore. For there is a deadness and coldness about them, a want of something to satisfy the heart, of something to rest in as in an ark. And so it is in reading Pope. In his poetic heaven there is a sun, bright, searching, dazzling, but cold. Everything is revealed by it, clear and hard. No kindly haze floats between to make the beautiful more beauteous, and to robe the coarse and homely in its many-coloured mantle. And this is because there is no heat.

How much more comfortable we feel under such a lesser luminary as James Montgomery ! His sun is not so bright, does not glare with so fierce a ray, does not so light up every felon like a detective's lantern. But there is heat in it. We live and grow under it. Our hearts bless it ; and we feel that it is indeed a pleasant thing to behold the light of the sun. We glow with gratitude to the Great Father, with love to the Great Family, and we find rest and peace ourselves.

Pope resembled the great heathen moralists in nothing more than in the high—in fact, *prime*—place which he assigns to friendship in his category of virtues. A favourite argument in the early ages, and one which has been repeated frequently since, against the divine origin of Christianity, was that it did not expressly inculcate the duty and obligation of friendship. With regard to this virtue, the cultivated heathen intellect was possessed by a morbid sentimentalism, affected or really participated in by Pope and others in recent times, whose culture, like his, was essentially pagan. Piety also, as indicating affection for one's kindred, and, of course, closely allied to friendship, ranked very high among heathen virtues, especially as we see in their delineations of the heroic age ; and piety in this sense was another strong feature of Pope's moral nature. The affection he bestowed was warmly reciprocated. His half-sister, Mrs Racket, evidently thought there never was such another wonderful man as her brother. And his love for his mother—who can forget that touching story ? He had at one time an intense desire to travel, but he would not leave the poor old woman who lived only in his love. On no consideration would he remove himself for any length of time out of immediate reach of her. He might have gone with Berkeley to Italy, he might have visited Bolingbroke in France, he might have accepted Swift's frequent and urgent invitation to visit Ireland. But, though not unwilling to go, he framed excuses—chiefly the dread of sea-sickness. This may ulti-

mately have assumed even to himself, with his miserably weak and buckram-cased body, the form and consistence of a solid reason; but it was really his mother, coming well on to a hundred years of age, whose dull ears and lustreless eyes recognised her son long after they had ceased to recognise every other, that kept him at home. And as his piety or affection for his kindred was sincere, so was his affection for his friends. The querulous, peevish Pope never abandoned a friend. He stuck to them till they withdrew themselves. He says he abandoned Lady Mary Montagu, but this, perhaps, was a brag to hide an unpleasant blunder. He was in some respects a narrow man; his moral nature, as well as his body, had a twist in it. But his virtues were sincere, and had their roots firmly fixed in his very nature. His friendships were even generous. Wycherly ran off from him in a huff, and pooh-poohed him in society; but Pope, with his matchless satiric powers, and the fair scope for them in poor Wycherly's utterly undone character and bemuddled Muse, forgave the old scamp, spoke kindly of him, and visited him before he died. Gay, and Garth, and Arbuthnot, and Swift, and Peterborough, and Oxford, and Bolingbroke—with all these his friendship was romantically close and strong; of all worthy to be his friends he lost none but Addison, and of this the disgrace does not, as is now well known, rest with Pope.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF POPE.

A LESSON OF THANKFULNESS.

HEAVEN from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state;
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know:
Or who could suffer being here below?
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleased to the last he crops the flow'ry food,
And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.
Oh blindness to the future! kindly given,
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heaven.

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Hope humbly, then; with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher, Death; and God adore.
What future bliss, He gives not thee to know,
But gives that hope to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest:
The soul, uneasy and confined from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

Lo, the poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, and hears Him in the wind,
His soul proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk or milky way;
Yet simple nature to his hope has given,
Behind the cloud-topp'd hill, an humbler heaven;
Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
Some happier island in the wat'ry waste,
Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, nor Christians thirst for gold.
To *be*, contents his natural desire,
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.

Go, wiser thou, and in thy scale of sense
Weigh thy opinion against Providence;
Call imperfection what thou fanciest such;
Say, here he gives too little, there too much:
Destroy all creatures for thy sport or gust,
Yet cry, if man's unhappy, God's unjust;
If man alone engross not Heaven's high care,
Alone made perfect here, immortal there;
Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Re-judge His justice, be the god of God.



Lo, the poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind
 Sees God in clouds, and hears a Hun in the wind ;
 His soul proud science never taught to stray
 Far as the solar walk or milky way ;
 Yet simple nature to his hope has given,
 Behind the cloud-topp'd hill, an humbler heaven ;
 Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
 Some happier island in the wat'ry waste,
 Where slaves once more their native land behold,
 Nor friends torment, nor Christians thirst for gold.

UNIVERSAL BENEFICENCE OF PROVIDENCE.

HAS God, thou fool! work'd solely for thy good,
 Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?
 Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
 For him as kindly spreads the flow'ry lawn:
 Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings?
 Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.
 Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat?
 Loves of his own and rapture swell the note.
 The bounding steed you pompously bestride,
 Shares with his lord the pleasure and the pride.
 Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain?
 The birds of heaven shall vindicate their grain.
 Thine the full harvest of the golden year?
 Part pays, and justly, the deserving steer;
 The hog, that ploughs not, nor obeys thy call,
 Lives on the labours of this Lord of all.

Know, Nature's children all divide her care;
 The fur that warms a monarch warm'd a bear.
 While man exclaims, "See all things for my use!"
 "See man for mine!" replies a pamper'd goose:
 And just as short of reason he must fall,
 Who thinks all made for one, not one for all.
 Grant that the powerful still the weak control;
 Be man the wit and tyrant of the whole!
 Nature that tyrant checks; he only knows,
 And helps another creature's wants and woes.
 Say, will the falcon, stooping from above,
 Smit with her varying plumage, spare the dove?
 Admires the jay the insect's gilded wings?
 Or hears the hawk when Philomela sings?
 Man cares for all: to birds he gives his woods,
 To beasts his pastures, and to fish his floods:
 For some his interest prompts him to provide,
 For more his pleasure, yet for more his pride:
 All feed on one vain patron, and enjoy
 Th' extensive blessing of his luxury.
 That very life his learned hunger craves,
 He saves from famine, from the savage saves:
 Nay, feasts the animal he dooms his feast,
 And, till he ends the being, makes it blest;
 Which sees no more the stroke, or feels the pain,
 Than favour'd man by touch ethereal slain;
 The creature had his feast of life before,
 Thou too must perish when thy feast is o'er.

THE DYING CHRISTIAN TO HIS SOUL.

VITAL spark of heavenly flame!
 Quit, oh, quit this mortal frame!
 Trembling, hoping, ling'ring, flying;
 Oh, the pain, the bliss of dying!

Cease, fond nature! cease thy strife,
 And let me languish into life!
 Hark! they whisper—angels say,
 “Sister spirit, come away!”
 What is this absorbs me quite,
 Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
 Drowns my spirit, draws my breath?
 Tell me, my soul—can this be death?
 The world recedes—it disappears!
 Heaven opens on my eyes!—my ears
 With sounds seraphic ring!
 Lend, lend your wings! I mount! I fly!
 O grave! where is thy victory?
 O death! where is thy sting?

UNIVERSAL ORDER.

ALL are but parts of one stupendous whole,
 Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
 That, changed through all, and yet in all the same,
 Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame;
 Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
 Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees;
 Lives through all life, extends through all extent;
 Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
 Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
 As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
 As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
 As the rapt seraph that adores and burns;
 To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
 He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

Cease then, nor order imperfection name:
 Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
 Know thy own point: This kind, this true degree
 Of blindness, weakness, Heaven bestows on thee.
 Submit.—In this or any other sphere,
 Secure to be as bless'd as thou canst bear.
 Safe in the hand of one disposing power,
 Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
 All nature is but art unknown to thee;
 All chance, direction, which thou canst not see.
 All discord, harmony not understood;
 All partial evil, universal good.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

KNOW thou thyself, presume not God to scan,
 The proper study of mankind is Man,
 Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
 A being darkly wise, and rudely great;

With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
 With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
 He hangs between ; in doubt to act, or rest,
 In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast ;
 In doubt his mind or body to prefer ;
 Born but to die, and reasoning but to err ;
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
 Whether he thinks too little, or too much :
 Chaos of thought and passion, all confused ;
 Still by himself abused or disabused ;
 Created half to rise, and half to fall ;
 Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all ;
 Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd ;
 The glory, jest, and riddle of the world !

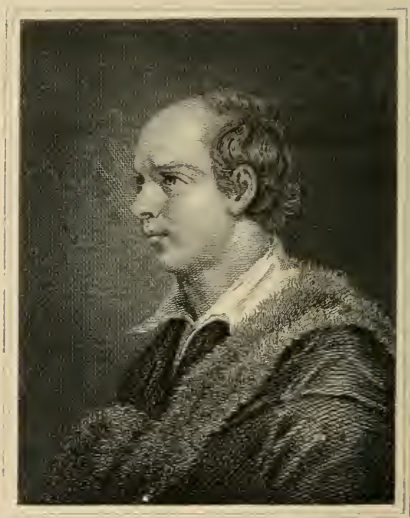
Go, wondrous creature : mount where Science guides ;
 Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides ;
 Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
 Correct old Time, and regulate the Sun ;
 Go, soar with Plato to the empyreal sphere,
 To the first good, first perfect, and first fair ;
 Or tread the mazy round his followers trod,
 And, quitting sense, call imitating God ;
 As Eastern priests in giddy circles run,
 And turn their heads to imitate the Sun.
 Go teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—
 Then drop into thyself, and be a fool !

KNOWLEDGE PROGRESSIVE.

FIRE at first sight, with what the muse imparts,
 In fearless youth, we tempt the heights of arts,
 While from the bounded level of our mind,
 Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind ;
 But, more advanced, behold with strange surprise
 New distant scenes of endless science rise !
 So pleased at first the tow'ring Alps we try,
 Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky ;
 The eternal snows appear already past,
 And the first clouds and mountains seem the last :
 But, those attained, we tremble to survey
 The growing labours of the lengthen'd way,
 The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
 Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise !

CONTENTMENT.

HAPPY the man, whose wish and care
 A few paternal acres bound,
 Content to breathe his native air
 In his own ground.



Engraved by Will^m Howson Edin^g

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

GOLDSMITH.

THE life and writings of Oliver Goldsmith, more than those of almost any other author, are mutually illustrative. A knowledge of his life explains the most important of his writings; and the study of these writings acquaints us with the leading incidents of his life. This memoir, accordingly, might be framed in nearly an autobiographical form: should therefore the reader find in these pages less of mine, from the abundance of quotation, he will have, what is better, more of Goldsmith.

Oliver Goldsmith was born on the 10th of November 1728, at Pallas, a small village in the county of Longford, Ireland. He was the second son of the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, incumbent of the parish, the country parson so lovingly described in "The Deserted Village."

"A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year."

Within two years from the birth of Oliver, however, he succeeded his wife's uncle in the rectory of Kilkenny-West, a living worth £200 a year; and took up his abode at Lissoy, in the county of Westmeath. Lissoy claims the honour of being the counterpart of

"Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain;"
and many a scene painted in "The Vicar of Wakefield" and

"The Deserted Village" was taken from the surroundings of his boyhood. Having been initiated into the mysteries of the alphabet by a Mistress Delap, of Scottish origin, he entered the school of Thomas Byrne, a regular Irishman, full of old-world stories, who had served in the Spanish war, and was an enthusiastic admirer of the Irish muse. These are features somewhat different from those of the schoolmaster of "The Deserted Village," but not incompatible with them—

"A man severe he was, and stern to view;
I knew him well, and every truant too."

A severe attack of smallpox, which greatly disfigured his face, was the cause of his removal from the charge of this pedagogue. In order to prepare for the university, he was sent successively to the classical seminaries of Athlone and Edgeworthstown, at which he was more distinguished as the butt of the school, than for his diligence and proficiency as a scholar. On his way home from school on one occasion a wag, perceiving his unsuspecting simplicity, played off upon him the practical joke of directing him to the village mansion instead of the inn—a blunder on which he afterwards based the plot of the comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer; or, The Mistakes of a Night."

When sixteen years of age, Oliver entered Trinity College, Dublin, in the humble capacity of a "sizar," receiving gratuitous board and education in return for certain menial services. The natural exuberance of his spirit, rebounding from the exasperating annoyances of his situation, led him to give a gay party in his little attic room, in direct violation of college rules. His tutor pounced upon the unlawful gathering, dispersed it, and inflicted corporal punishment on the offender. Stung with this disgrace, he quitted college, loitered about Dublin till reduced to absolute poverty, and then communicated his sad plight to his elder brother Henry, for his kind and forgiving father had recently died. Henry succeeded in reinstating him in his sizarship; after

which he resided at college for two years, occasionally giving indication of superior but exceptional talent. Among the other students of Trinity at the time was Edmund Burke. There is no evidence that there was any intimacy, or even any acquaintanceship, between them as students; but the circles of their lives met again long afterwards in London, where they became warmly-attached friends. In 1749 he took his B.A. degree,—the lowest on the list,—and left college.

It was then determined, in utter disregard of his manifest unfitness, that he should enter the Church. He applied to the Bishop of Elfin for ordination, arrayed in scarlet breeches; but his lordship took exception to his scholarship, theology, or morals, and dismissed him. Law was next, with similar inconsiderateness, selected. His uncle Contarine and other friends furnished him with money to proceed to London and enter himself at the Temple. On his way thither he got as far as Dublin, where he met a sharper from Roscommon, who stript him of his money; and he was again compelled to return to his poor mother, whose widowed heart was sorely burdened by this new proof of her son's folly. There now remained of the learned professions only that of medicine. Accordingly, another little purse being collected for him, he set out for Edinburgh, then, as now, one of the first medical schools of the world. During the sessions of 1752 and 53 he attended, with what for him was wonderful regularity, the lectures of the professors, rambling about the country during the summer recesses.

On the pretext, or with the serious intention, of completing his medical studies under the distinguished Albinus of Leyden, he now resolved on going to the Continent. He took ship for Bordeaux,—an inexplicable choice for one going to Leyden,—but owing to stress of weather it had to put in at Newcastle. Here he and his four fellow-passengers were apprehended as agents of the French Government. This, which might be regarded as a misfortune, saved his life; for

the ship, continuing its voyage to Bordeaux, was wrecked at the mouth of the Garonne, and all on board perished. After some delay he was liberated, and sailed direct for Rotterdam, proceeding thence on foot to Leyden. His time and attention during the eighteen months he spent at this university, were divided between the lecture-hall and gambling-table—the fashionable resort of the day, which he had not sufficient power of will to resist. An Irish fellow-student, Ellis, perceiving the straits into which Goldsmith had brought himself, and the danger of utter ruin to which he was exposed, offered him money, on condition that he would leave Leyden. To this proposal he readily acceded, received the money, was then seized by a sudden desire of manifesting his gratitude to his indulgent uncle Contarine; and the tulip-mania being then at its height, he expended the whole of Ellis's present on tulip-roots. Whether these precious roots ever flourished in the garden of the worthy incumbent of Ballymahon is uncertain; but the story manifests the warmth of Goldsmith's affections, and the reckless improvidence of his habits. Again reduced to poverty, but too much ashamed to own it, he started on foot for a tour through Europe, with one clean shirt, a flute, and a guinea as provision for his journey.

Having trudged through Belgium and France, he arrived at Geneva, where he became tutor to an English youth, whose character seems to have been the very opposite of his own. "I was to be the young gentleman's governor," says the "Philosophic Vagabond;" "but with this proviso, that he should always be permitted to govern himself. My pupil, in fact, understood the art of guiding in money concerns much better than I. He was heir to a fortune of about two hundred thousand pounds, left him by an uncle in the West Indies; and his guardians, to qualify him for the management of it, had bound him apprentice to an attorney. Thus avarice was his prevailing passion; all his questions on the road were,—how money might be saved? which was the least expensive course of travel? whether anything could be

bought that would turn to account when disposed of again in London? Such curiosities on the way as could be seen for nothing, he was ready enough to look at; but if the sight of them was to be paid for, he usually asserted that he had been told that they were not worth seeing. He never paid a bill that he would not observe how amazingly expensive travelling was; and all this though not yet twenty-one." To the great satisfaction of both, this engagement terminated at Marseilles; and Goldsmith, enriched somewhat by his tutorial fee, travelled onward through the north of Italy. At Padua he resided seven months, and it is matter of dispute whether or not he received the title of M.D. from this university. This was the turning-point of his wanderings; for, partly driven by the exhaustion of his resources, partly induced by the ill news of his uncle Contarine's health, he directed his steps homeward through France. The "Philosophic Vagabond" tells us how his flute was his forager:—"Whenever I approached a peasant's house towards nightfall, I played one of my most merry tunes, and that procured for me not only a lodging, but subsistence for the next day." To the same circumstance he alludes more graphically in "The Traveller:"—

"How often have I led thy sportive choir,
With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire!
And haply, though my harsh touch, faltering still,
But mock'd all tune, and marr'd the dancer's skill,
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power,
And dance forgetful of the noontide hour.
Alike all ages; dames of ancient days
Have led their children through the mirthful maze;
And the gay grandsire, skill'd in gestie lore,
Has frisk'd beneath the burden of threescore."

"In this manner, therefore, I fought my way towards England, walked along from city to city, examined mankind more nearly, and, if I may so express it, saw both sides of the picture."

His wanderings all over, he arrived in London in February 1756. He was now in his twenty-eighth year, with a livelihood to make in a country where his voice and flute were of

no service. "You may easily imagine what difficulties I had to encounter, left as I was without friends, recommendations, money, or impudence, and that too in a country where my being born an Irishman was sufficient to keep me unemployed. Many, in such circumstances, would have had recourse to the friar's cord or the suicide's halter ; but with all my follies, I had principle to resist the one, and resolution to combat the other."

Let us endeavour to realise Goldsmith's position and prospects at this emphatically the most important epoch of his life. His character was fixed,—if such a term can be appropriately applied to one so fickle,—for his youth was past, and his education completed. It is too late to till and sow in July ; and therefore the harvest Goldsmith was to reap was already determined, although still distant. Extent and diversity characterised his knowledge, rather than depth or accuracy,—a mind well stored but ill trained. The usual epithet given to men of genius—"a child of nature"—is peculiarly applicable to him. In simplicity he was still a child, improvident as a boy who is filled only with the present ; artless, open, and undisguised, as one who has not yet found "that men betray." He proved his right to the title, "a child of nature," by the love he bore his mother. He never took kindly to the dry-nurses,—books and universities,—but ever desired to lie idly in the lap of nature, and receive instruction direct from her own lips. Hitherto his life had been passive, not active—impressionable in a high degree, but no way impressive in return. His only achievements were his B.A. degree of Trinity College, Dublin, and his M.D. of Padua University, if so be that he had that degree ; and with these he now endeavoured to make his way in London. As a man's looks and manners greatly help or hinder his success in life, we give here two descriptions of him, of date somewhat posterior, when he had raised himself to the foremost rank of contemporary authors. Judge Day, who had met him while he was a student at the Temple says :—"In person he was

short, about five feet five or six inches; strong, but not heavy in make; rather fair in complexion, with brown hair, such at least as could be distinguished from his wig. His features were plain, but not repulsive,—certainly not so when lighted up by conversation. His manners were simple, natural, and perhaps on the whole, we may say, not polished, at least without the refinement and good-breeding which the exquisite polish of his composition would lead us to suspect. He was always cheerful and animated, often indeed boisterous in his mirth; entered with spirit into convivial society; contributed largely to its enjoyments by solidity of information and the *naïveté* and originality of his character; talked often without premeditation, and laughed loudly without restraint." The other description is from the pen of a lady:—"He was a very plain man, but had he been much more so it was impossible not to love and respect his goodness of heart, which broke out on every occasion. His benevolence was unquestionable, and his countenance bore every trace of it; no one that knew him intimately could avoid admiring and loving his good qualities." Miss Reynolds, a sister of Sir Joshua, at whose house Goldsmith subsequently became a frequent and welcome guest, being asked on one occasion to toast the ugliest man she knew, unhesitatingly gave "Dr Goldsmith." Afterwards, on "The Traveller" being read aloud in her presence by Dr Johnson, she exclaimed, "Well, I never more shall think Dr Goldsmith ugly!" Whether this story be true or not, it contains the truth. Goldsmith possessed no personal attractions; all his claims on admiration were based upon the kind simplicity of his character, the exquisite beauty of his thought, and the graceful elegance of his composition.

We resume our narrative. On the strength of his B.A. degree he obtained an ushership in a school, a situation then as now, it would seem, by no means agreeable, at least so Goldsmith found it, for he writes, "I have been an usher in a boarding-school myself, and may I die of an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be under-turnkey in Newgate. I was

up early and late, I was browbeat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys." Elsewhere he thus recounts the hardships of an usher's life:—"He is generally the laughing-stock of the school. Every trick is played upon him; the oddity of his manner, his dress, or his language, is a fund of eternal ridicule; the master himself now and then cannot avoid joining in the laugh; and the poor wretch, eternally resenting this ill usage, lives in a state of war with all the family."—"He is obliged, perhaps, to sleep in the same bed with the French teacher, who disturbs him for an hour every night in papering and filleting his hair, and stinks worse than a carrion with his rancid pomatums, when he lays his head beside him on the bolster."

His B.A. having failed him, he tried what the Paduan doctorate could do. He obtained an assistantship in a laboratory in Fish-street Hill, and afterwards commenced on his own account a medical practice in Southwark. His patients were all among the poor, and the scanty fees which they could give, or his own generosity allow him to accept, were quite insufficient to support him. What was to be done? He seemed to have exhausted his own resources, when a poor patient, a printer, succeeded in bringing him under the notice of his master, Mr Samuel Richardson, publisher, and author of "Sir Charles Grandison," who employed him as a corrector for the press; and in this humble and fortuitous way Goldsmith entered the service of the Muses, in which he afterwards found abundant labour, and earned lasting fame.

For five or six years he led a hand-to-mouth life—in turns, teacher, physician, and literary hack. Now he would be planning an expedition to Arabia, to translate the inscriptions on the "Written Mountains;" now aiming at a medical appointment under the East India Company; and now presenting himself before the College of Surgeons for a mate's certificate. These gyrations gradually ceased, and left him

grinding at literature. Many of his earlier contributions to periodicals never having been owned by him have been lost. During five months of the year 1757 he wrote continuously for the *Monthly Magazine*, published by Griffiths, from whom he received a stated salary. This daily drudgery was too irksome for him, so he abandoned it, and wrote miscellaneously for *The Bee*, *Busyboddy*, *Lady's Magazine*, *The British Magazine*, &c. He then became connected with Mr Newbery, who employed him at a salary of one hundred a year to contribute two articles a week to the *Public Ledger*. These were letters purporting to be written by a Chinese philosopher on a visit to London, and abound in amusing sketches of London society. They were subsequently modified, and are now entitled "The Citizen of the World." His first separate publication was the "Inquiry into the State of Polite Literature," issued by the Dodsleys in March 1759. All these productions had been anonymous, but he was known as their author among men of letters, and was beginning to be valued by the publishers.

He now took handsomer apartments in Wine-Office Court, attended coffee-houses and debating-clubs, and began to feel that he had gained a footing in literature. His rooms were frequented by not a few men of note, and in the year 1760 they were graced by the presence of the living head of English literature, Dr Johnson. Once introduced, Johnson and Goldsmith became steadfast friends, notwithstanding the manifest contrarieties of their characters. Their past lives differed from each other, not so much in the diversity of their circumstances, as in the dissimilar impress given to these by their characters. Both rose from obscurity and poverty; but the one may be said to have climbed, while the other forced his way. -In Goldsmith we wonder how his pliancy, turning aside at every obstacle, still surmounts by yielding; and in Johnson we are astonished at the titanic strength and perseverance which force aside every obstruction. His acquaintance was now spreading rapidly among the notables

of the day. Hogarth the artist frequented a country house he occupied at Islington during the summer of 1762. He was in many respects a kindred genius, representing on canvas, as Goldsmith did in writing, the humours and whimsicalities of human nature. In this or the succeeding year he was introduced to Sir Joshua Reynolds, at the time in the acme of his renown. He thus became connected with a higher and more refined circle than any in which he had as yet moved.

The frequent meetings of literary men at Reynolds's house developed in 1764 into the "Literary Club," one of the most interesting associations of men of letters. Dr Johnson was its head. Its number was at first limited to nine, the original members being Johnson, Reynolds, Goldsmith, Burke, —meeting again, on more equal terms, the quondam sizar of Trinity College,—Dr Nugent, a distinguished physician, and father-in-law to Burke; Sir John Hawkins, a bucolic *littérateur* and county magistrate, wealthy, but so stingy as to dread the expense of the usual suppers; Anthony Chamier, secretary in the War Office; Bennet Langton and Topham Beauclerc, young men of good families, fresh from Oxford, and great admirers of Dr Johnson. The club met weekly at the Turk's Head, Gerard Street, Soho; where they supped together in the enjoyment of each other's fellowship. Dr Johnson was of course the great authority, with whom scarcely any one dared enter discussion, "for when his pistol misses fire, he knocks you down with the handle." Goldsmith was very defective in conversational power, and frequently exposed himself to the ridicule of the whole club. Like Samson with the jesting Philistines, however, he took his revenge upon them all at one great sweep. Shortly before his death, he returned from the club one evening, where he had been more than usually bantered by such quick wits as Burke and Garrick, sat down and wrote "Retaliation," in which the members stand for all time petrified in Attic salt.

Some of the members, especially Hawkins, had considered

Goldsmith an anonymous periodical scribbler, unworthy of admission into such a choice company; but Dr Johnson and Reynolds knew better, and the club had not been a year in existence before one of its proudest honours was that it numbered Goldsmith among its members. On the 15th December 1764 Newbery published "The Traveller," the first work which bore Goldsmith's name. He had been exceedingly diffident about adventuring on the field of poetry. "I fear," he said, "I have come too late into the world; Pope and other poets have taken up the places in the temple of fame; and as few at any period can possess poetical reputation, a man of genius can now hardly acquire it." Dr Johnson, to whom he had submitted the MS., brushed away all these fears by his hearty commendation; and the opinion entertained by this intellectual leader before its publication, and expressed in his subsequent notice of it in the *Critical Review*, has been corroborated by the public favour, which it gained in its own day, and still enjoys. The poem is dedicated not to any man of influence or reputation, but to an obscure Irish parson, his elder brother Henry, to whom he ever bore the warmest affection, not unmingled with a certain reverence for that heroic resignation and steadfastness, in which he felt himself so deficient:—

"Where'er I roam, whatever realms to see,
My heart, untravell'd, fondly turns to thee;
Still to my brother turns, with ceaseless pain,
And drags at each remove a length'ning chain."

In the plan of the poem there is a noble simplicity. He describes himself as taking a position on some high Alpine solitude, from which he beholds wide realms beneath him, with all their varieties of race, customs, and climate,—Italy in the luxuriance of nature's bounty, with its degenerate sons, the barren hills of the simple but coarse Swiss, the "gay, sprightly land of France," Holland "embosomed in the deep," and Britain "fostered by freedom." Each pre-

sents its special advantages ; but the good is never unalloyed, even

“That independence Britons prize too high,
Keeps man from man, and breaks the social tie ;
The self-dependent lordlings stand alone,
All claims that bind and sweeten life unknown.”

From the consideration of all which the poet exclaims,—

“How small, of all that human hearts endure,
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure !
Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find !”

The success of the poem was very rapid, four editions being called for in the course of the first year. A change, similar to that wrought by it in Miss Reynolds's opinion of the author, happened to the sentiments of many others. He was no longer regarded as the booby of the club, whose admission had been rather a mistake. The unknown scribbler had become the best known poet of the day.

In 1766, while “The Traveller” was at the height of its popularity, there appeared “The Vicar of Wakefield,” which had been in the hands of Mr Newbery for a considerable period. The publisher had been so doubtful of its merits, that it was not till after “The Traveller” had established Goldsmith's reputation that he ventured on its publication. The story which Johnson tells of the purchase of the MS., gives a ludicrous peep into the domestic habits of our author. “I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had changed my guinea, and had a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him. I put the cork into the bottle, desired he would be calm, and began to talk to him of the means by which he might be extricated. He then told me

he had a novel ready for the press, which he produced to me. I looked into it, and saw its merit ; told the landlady I should soon return ; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds. I brought Goldsmith the money, and he discharged his rent, not without rating his landlady in a high tone for having used him so ill." The success of "The Vicar of Wakefield," notwithstanding Mr Newbery's gloomy forebodings, was as rapid, and its popularity has proved as permanent, as those of "The Traveller." In this charming fiction, with all its defects of arrangement and probability, we have the genuine product of Goldsmith's genius. We take it as the most truly representative of all his works—many of the incidents being little more than autobiographical sketches.

His reputation as a poet and novelist was established by "The Traveller" and "The Vicar of Wakefield." His next essay was in the drama. One of his very first attempts in literature had been a tragedy, never completed. He now turned his mind to the more congenial branch of comedy, and in 1768 "The Good-natured Man" was brought out at Covent Garden, and proved a triumphant success. It was performed for ten nights in succession, one representation being by the command of their majesties. This comedy has, perhaps, not done so much for Goldsmith's fame as either the Traveller or the Vicar ; but it did five times more for his purse. His benefit nights yielded him £400, and he sold the copyright for another hundred.

Two years later appeared "The Deserted Village," the companion and rival of "The Traveller." In the one there is more symmetry of design ; in the other more exquisite execution. There are certain passages in "The Deserted Village" unequalled by any in "The Traveller ;" but we doubt whether, on the whole, the palm should not be awarded to the first-born. Objection has been taken to it on the ground of incongruity by some critics, who allege that "Sweet Auburn" in its prosperity is an English hamlet, but

that the Deserted Village is an Irish waste. The beauty of the poem, however, is not affected by such a change: the description of the country parson, with its mingled shades of fun, pathos, and sublimity, is one of the loveliest pictures in English literature, which will be quoted and admired as long as the English language is known.

In 1773 another comedy, "She Stoops to Conquer; or, The Mistakes of a Night," was acted with great success at Covent Garden, in spite of the almost undisguised opposition of the manager and leading actors. With this comedy may be closed the volume of Goldsmith's works; for upon these which we have so briefly catalogued in the preceding paragraphs, rests his claim to be ranked among English classics. They do not however exhaust his labours, for while engaged on these more congenial, but less lucrative works, he was compelled to drudge to publishers for a livelihood.

Besides a republication of his Essays, and ordinary hack work, from which he was never long free, he wrote during the winter 1768-9 a History of Rome, for which he received £300; a History of England, which first appeared in the form of letters from a nobleman to his son, and afterwards in a fuller form in 1771, which brought him £600; a History of Greece, in two volumes, by which he made £250; and a Natural History, in several volumes, for which, although it was not finished till near his death, he had previously received 800 guineas. Whatever the defects of these works may be, and the characteristic inaccuracy of the author greatly weakens their authority, they still manifest the hand of a master in the powerful grouping of leading facts, and the graceful settling of details.

Towards the close of 1772 he began to feel the first symptoms of failing health. His incessant labours and the excitements of London life increased his uneasiness, and compelled his retreat into the country. His gay and sanguine temperament began to droop, his carelessness in money matters had sunk him deep in debt, and his hopeless

drudgery hung round him like a dead weight. He returned to town in the spring of 1774, was attacked by a low nervous fever, for which he would himself prescribe, contrary to the advice of his physicians. Without any premonitory symptoms, he was seized with violent convulsions on the morning of the 4th April, and expired about five o'clock. His sudden and premature death startled the literary world, and struck the closer circle of his acquaintance with deep anguish. Old Dr Johnson felt the blow heavily, but undemonstratively, as was his nature. The more impassioned Burke burst into tears; and Sir Joshua Reynolds was compelled by grief to abandon for the day the labours of his easel. He was buried privately in the Temple burying-ground, on Saturday evening, 9th April 1774.

During that silent week a sunbeam entered the darkened Temple room, the thought of which would have lightened many heavy days, had poor Goldsmith known that Miss Horneck, the beautiful and accomplished lady of his affections, would have sought a lock of his hair, and have cherished it and the remembrance of the poet's love till the close of her long life, which extended almost to our own day.

Many years before his death, he and Dr Johnson had been strolling through Westminster Abbey, and when they came to the Poets' Corner, Johnson had quietly said,—

"Fossitan et nostrum nomen miscebitur istis"

Goldsmith had often repeated this wish, which Johnson now desired to accomplish. The Literary Club raised a fund for a suitable monument, which was executed by Nollekins, and was placed beside that of the poet Gay. It bears the following inscription from the pen of his old and steadfast friend:—

“OLIVARI GOLDSMITH,
POETÆ, PHYSICI, HISTORICI,
QUI NULLUM FERE SCRIBENDI GENUS
NON TETIGIT,
NULLUM QUOD TETIGIT NON ORNAVIT:

SIVE RISUS ESSENT MOVENDI,
 SIVE LACRYMÆ,
 AFFECTUUM POTENS AT LENIS DOMINATOE:
 INGENIO SUBLIMIS, VIVIDUS, VERSATILIS,
 ORATIONE GRANDIS, NITIDUS, VENUSTUS:
 HOC MONUMENTO MEMORIAM COLUIT
 SODALIUM AMOR,
 AMICORUM FIDES,
 LECTORUM VENERATIO.
 NATUS IN HIBERNIÂ FORNIE LONGFORDIENSIS,
 IN LOCO CUI NOMEN PALLAS,
 NOV. XXIX., MDCCXXXI.*
 EBLANÆ LITERIS INSTITUTUS;
 OBIT LONDINI,
 APRIL IV., MDCCLXXIV.⁷

* This date is inaccurate.



A man he was to all the country dear,
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
 Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
 Nor e'er had changed, nor wish'd to change his place;
 Unpractis'd he to fawn, or seek for power,
 By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
 Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
 More skill'd to raise the wretched than to rise.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF GOLDSMITH.

THE VILLAGE PREACHER.

NEAR yonder copse where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden-flower grows wild,
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year;
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wish'd to change his place;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashion'd to the varying hour;
Far other aims his heart had learn'd to prize,
More skill'd to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain:
The long-remember'd beggar was his guest,
Whose beard, descending, swept his aged breast;
The ruin'd spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claim'd kindred there, and had his claim allow'd;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talk'd the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or, tales of sorrow done,
Shoulder'd his crutch, and show'd how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learn'd to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings lean'd to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watch'd and wept, he pray'd and felt for all:
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries,
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Beside the bed where parting life was laid,
And sorrow, guilt, and pain by turns dismay'd,
The reverend champion stood. At his control
Despair and anguish fled the struggling soul;
Comfort came down, the trembling wretch to raise,
And his last faltering accents whisper'd praise.

At church, with meek and unaffected grace,
His looks adorn'd the venerable place;
Truth from his lips prevail'd with double sway,
And fools, who came to scoff, remain'd to pray.

The service past, around the pious man,
 With steady zeal, each honest rustic ran ;
 Even children follow'd with endearing wile,
 And pluck'd his gown, to share the good man's smile.
 His ready smile a parent's warmth express'd,
 Their welfare pleased him, and their cares distress'd ;
 To them his heart, his love, his griefs were given,
 But all his serious thoughts had rest in Heaven.
 As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm ;
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

THE PARISH SCHOOLMASTER.

BESIDE yon straggling fence that skirts the way,
 With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay,
 There, in his noisy mansion skill'd to rule,
 The village master taught his little school ;
 A man severe he was, and stern to view ;
 I knew him well, and every truant knew.
 Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace
 The day's disasters in his morning's face ;
 Full well they laugh'd with counterfeited glee
 At all his jokes, for many a joke had he ;
 Full well the busy whisper circling round,
 Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd ;
 Yet he was kind ; or, if severe in aught,
 The love he bore to learning was in fault ;
 The village all declared how much he knew ;
 'Twas certain he could write and cipher too ;
 Lands he could measure, terms and tides presage,
 And even the story ran that he could gauge ;
 In arguing, too, the parson own'd his skill,
 For even, though vanquish'd, he could argue still ;
 While words of learned length, and thundering sound,
 Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around ;
 And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
 That one small head could carry all he knew.
 But past is all his fame : the very spot,
 Where many a time he triumph'd, is forgot.

CHARACTER OF DAVID GARRICK.

HERE lies David Garrick, describe me who can,
 An abridgment of all that was pleasant in man ;
 Yet, with talents like these, and an excellent heart,
 The man had his failings, a dupe to his art.
 Like an ill-judging beauty, his colours he spread,
 And beplaster'd with rouge his own natural red.

On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting ;
 'Twas only that when he was off he was acting.
 As an actor, confess'd without rival to shine ;
 As a wit, if not first, in the very first line :
 With no reason on earth to go out of his way,
 He turn'd and varied full ten times a day :
 Though secure of our hearts, yet confoundedly sick,
 If they were not his own by finessing and trick :
 He cast off his friends as a huntsman his pack,
 For he knew when he pleased he could whistle them back.
 Of praise a mere glutton, he swallow'd what came,
 And the puff of a dunce he mistook it for fame ;
 Till his relish grown callous, almost to disease,
 Who pepper'd the highest was surest to please.
 But let us be candid, and speak out our mind,
 If dunces applauded, he paid them in kind.
 Ye Kenricks, ye Kellys, and Woodfalls so grave !
 What a commerce was yours, while you got and you gave !
 How did Grub Street re-echo the shouts that you raised !
 While he was be-Roscious'd, and you were bepraised !
 But peace to his spirit, wherever it flies,
 To act as an angel and mix with the skies :
 Those poets who owe their best fame to his skill,
 Shall still be his flatterers, go where he will ;
 Old Shakespeare receive him with praise and with love,
 And Beaumonts and Bens be his Kellys above.

LOVE OF HOME.

In all my wand'rings round this world of care,
 In all my grief—and God has given my share—
 I still had hopes, my latest hours to crown,
 Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down ;
 To husband out life's taper at the close,
 And keep the flame from wasting my repose :
 I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
 Amidst the swains to show my book-learn'd skill—
 Around my fire an evening group to draw,
 And tell of all I felt and all I saw ;
 And, as a hare, whom hounds and horn pursue,
 Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,
 I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
 Here to return, and die at home at last.
 O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,
 Retreat from care, that never must be mine !
 How blest is he, who crowns, in shades like these,
 A youth of labour, with an age of ease ;
 Who quits a world where strong temptations try,
 And, since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly !

RECREATION.

How often have I bless'd the coming day,
 When toil, remitting, lent its turn to play,
 And all the village train from labour free,
 Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree.
 While many a pastime circled in the shade,
 The young contending as the old survey'd ;
 And many a gambol frolic'd o'er the ground,
 And sleights of art and feats of strength went round.
 And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
 Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired ;
 The dancing pair, that simply sought renown
 By holding out to tire each other down :
 The swain, mistrustless of his smutt'd face,
 While secret laughter titter'd round the place ;
 The bashful virgin's sidelong looks of love,
 The matron's glance that would those looks reprove :
 These were thy charms, sweet village ! sports like these,
 With sweet succession, taught e'en toil to please ;
 These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
 These were thy charms—but all these charms are fled !

HAPPINESS.

BUT where to find that happiest spot below,
 Who can direct, when all pretend to know ?
 The shudd'ring tenant of the frigid zone
 Boldly proclaims the happiest spot his own ;
 Extols the treasures of his stormy seas,
 And his long nights of revelry and ease.
 The naked negro, panting at the line,
 Boasts of his golden sands and palmy wine,
 Basks in the glare, or stems the tepid wave,
 And thanks his gods for all the good they gave.
 Such is the patriot's boast, where'er we roam,
 His first, best country, ever is at home.
 And yet perhaps, if countries we compare,
 And estimate the blessings which they share.
 Though patriots flatter, still shall wisdom find
 An equal portion dealt to all mankind :
 As different good, by art or nature given,
 To different nations makes their blessings even.



Byron

BYRON.

GEORGE GORDON LORD BYRON was descended of a very ancient and illustrious family. The celebrated Commodore Byron, an account of whose shipwrecks once delighted so much the readers of adventures, was his grandfather. His father was Captain Byron, an extravagant and licentious man, who, after squandering his own fortune, married Miss Gordon of Gight, in Aberdeenshire, and got with her not only the property to which she was heiress, but a considerable sum of money, all of which he soon spent. The poet was born in London on the 22d of January 1788, two years after which his mother, in consequence of the death of her husband, left England, and took up her residence at Aberdeen—a place suited to her now scanty resources, which were not supplemented by her husband's uncle, the then Lord Byron, a retired and gloomy man, of an ungenerous spirit.

For eight years the poet resided with his mother; and here began that treatment which, acting on a generous but irritable mind, laid the foundation of a character marked by so many virtues, and so many offences against good taste and public morals. His mother, whose life had been soured by the extravagant conduct of her husband, acted towards the boy—who was not only of a weak bodily habit, but deformed in one, if not both, of his feet—as if she had predetermined to make his moral nature of that anomalous character it afterwards exhibited, the means she employed being indul-

gence, not always deserved, and severity, as seldom merited. These cherished his natural hastiness of temper, as well as pampered his proud wilfulness, until the one hastened to irascibility, and the other to a selfish defiance of every one about him. All the good tendencies of his fine nature were thus weakened and misdirected, and all the bad ones were aggravated and deepened. To this was added a constant change of teachers, as well as methods of teaching, without reference to the abilities or inclinations of the boy, and the consequence resulted in an almost absolute indifference to all studies.

We have some glimpses of his boyhood while at Aberdeen. He was never forward in his school work, and was always far down in the class at the day-school to which he had been sent ; but while thus indifferent to the exercises of the head, he was even now, in his very boyhood, showing how strong was the emotional element in his nature. A deep impression was made upon his heart when no more than eight years of age by a young girl of the name of Mary Duff. So genuine had been this early love, that even in 1813, when he was twenty-five years of age, he confesses that the news of Mary Duff's marriage was like "a thunderstroke,—it nearly choked me, to the horror of my mother, and the astonishment and incredulity of almost everybody." About the same time, on recovering from scarlet fever, he was sent for fresh air to a farmhouse, near Ballater. The house has become famous ; and the bed where the poet lay is still pointed out as Byron's bed. It was here probably that he was impressed with the grandeur of Highland scenery ; for a short walk sufficed to bring him to dark Lochnagar, that mountain which inspired almost the earliest, certainly the best, of the early efforts of his muse. It is even said, in praise of the overlaid aspirations of his better nature, that the peace and innocence that reigned among these grand displays of nature haunted him amidst the fevered excitement of a conventional, if not dissipated life. In the *Island*, a poem written not long before

his death, he lets slip some thoughts which have reference to these early worshippings of his better nature :—

“But 'twas not all long ages' lore, nor all
Their nature held me in their thrilling thrall ;
The infant rapture still survived the boy,
And Lochnagar with Ida look'd o'er Troy.”

His mother's regular system of spoiling continued till his eleventh year, when the death of his granduncle made him the possessor of a noble title and a large property ; but it did not end here. Unfortunately, the mother was left by the guardians to take her own way with the now young lord ; and as if his good fortune had inflamed her desire to perfect the work she had so early begun, she had recourse to new methods,—one of which consisted in subjecting him to fruitless operations for the purpose, no doubt well designed, of curing his lameness, but the effect of which was only to sink deeper into his mind the bitter regret of his infirmity, and to increase that misanthropy which had been gradually rising out of asperity. It has been even said, we hope untruly, that his mother was in the habit of taunting him with this unfortunate deformity,—conduct so cruel and gratuitous as to require a better proof than it has yet received.

On his removal to an excellent private school at Dulwich, under Dr Glennie, it was very soon seen what benefit resulted from a cessation of the mother's authority, for here he manifested much improvement both in temper and industry ; and had it not been for the still constant interferences from home, the world might have been saved the pain of seeing genius clouded by moral infirmities. Even here, long visits to home broke in upon his studies, and sent him back to begin of new a course of amendment.

On his next removal, to Harrow, new hopes were inspired ; and though he proved himself often rebellious, and a not very careful student, especially of the classics, he went through a great deal of miscellaneous reading. Then, on all hands, he was admired for his generosity, and courted for

his spirit. It was in 1803, while spending the vacation at Nottingham, near Newstead, and before he had reached his eighteenth year, that he met a young lady, Miss Chaworth, the heiress of Annesley, an extensive estate in the neighbourhood of his patrimonial mansion. His senior by two years, and gifted with both beauty and intelligence, she was calculated to have redeemed him from his errors without abating the enthusiasm of his genius ; but the young lady, besides being engaged, saw nothing in him to attract her, or even stir her sympathy. Instead of regarding him as one worthy of being a candidate for her hand, she looked upon him as a mere schoolboy. Byron was not slow to see this, and his eyes were still more effectually opened when it was reported to him that she had used the expression, "Do you think I would care anything for that lame boy?" Yet all this did not cure his love—if it did not, according to the common rule, increase it. Though there is said to have been some romance in this attachment, founded on the fact of a near relative of the young lady having been killed by the prior Lord Byron in a duel, it seems to be the general opinion that his affection was not only not a mere flitting feeling, but perhaps more generous and ardent than any love he ever entertained afterwards ; but it seems to have been Byron's fate to have had all outward powers and agencies ever ready to intercept his return to moderation and prudence. Of this lady he says—

"There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him ; he had look'd
Upon it till it could not pass away ;
He had no breath, no being, but in hers :
She was his voice ; he did not speak to her,
But trembled on her words : she was his sight,
For his eye follow'd hers, and saw with hers,
Which colour'd all his objects :—he had ceased
To live within himself ; she was his life."

In another part of the same poem he alludes to her melancholy fate—derangement :—

“The Lady of his love ;—oh, she was changed,
 As by the sickness of the soul ; her mind
 Had wander'd from its dwelling, and her eyes,
 They had not their own lustre, but the look
 Which is not of the earth ; she was become
 The queen of a fantastic realm.”

The latter disappointment, or this love all on one side, tended still further to confirm the early tendency to misanthropy which had its beginnings in his deformity and his mother's treatment. Yet so flexible is human nature—drawing strength from weakness—that his genius, as Goethe says, was pain. Even he himself admits that the very misfortune he so often regretted was the source of the power which he wielded, though probably it is more true that it only affected the direction of that power. In *The Deformed Transformed*, he says—

“Deformity is daring.

It is its essence to o’ertake mankind
 By heart and soul, and make itself the equal—
 Ay, the superior of the rest. There is
 A spur in its halt movements, to become
 All that the others cannot, in such things
 As still are free to both, to compensate
 For stepdame Nature’s avarice at first.”

Entered at Trinity College, Cambridge, in the autumn of 1805, he resided there for two years. It is admitted that, when the humour seized him, he read avariciously, and thus acquired a great amount of varied and stray knowledge ; but in the midst of these acquisitions, which he sometimes poured forth, changed by the alchymy of his rising genius, so as to produce the impression that he was a young man of no ordinary promise, he was eccentric, profuse, and, in school language, idle. Signally a fast young man, he differed from his associates only in being often clouded in melancholy, and probably struggling with aspirations. He never loved either Cambridge or its learning, while all the self-will of his nature was arrayed against the laws and restrictions of the university, as well as those who administered them. The

ecclesiastical authority was, in particular, distasteful to him, for already he was seized with that spirit of scepticism which is ever allied to misanthropic tendencies, and this, again, brought down upon him the significant suspicion of his teachers. The dissociation from studies was in him another name for an utter resignation of both mind and body to his impulses. The fervency of his nature, not yet gratified by poetry, got relief in swimming and boxing; but here again his evil fate was in the way, for as his deformity had stood between him and his love, so now it militated against his success in competition, not that he was not both energetic and expert, but that he felt he might have been triumphant had he been more auspiciously formed. And it was not this drawback alone that he had to lament; which, if he had treated it as Scott did his similar infirmity, might have been borne with resignation and without loss; but he began at this time to show tokens of obesity, another evil which, as an infliction unmerited, he resented while he struggled against.

In the midst of all this he rushed into poetry, which, however, was only a continuation of a tendency already exhibited, for while at Dr Glennie's at Dulwich, he had struck off pieces to his cousin, Miss Margaret Parker. This he considered to have been his first effort; but his nurse, Mary Gray, who was not likely to have forgotten so important an exploit in the strange youth, represents him as having discharged a satire at an old lady who had angered him in some way. His efforts at Cambridge, however, had all the fire and rashness of a first burst. The pieces circulated from hand to hand before any were printed; but at length a small part of them were put to press. The first copy was presented to the Rev. John Becher, Southwell, whom he considered his friend, as no doubt he was; and probably that gentleman gave evidence of his sincerity in expostulating with him on the unwarranted "luxuriousness of colouring" in one specimen, whereupon the impatient youth instantly ordered the whole stock to be burned. Only two copies remained—Mr

Becher's own, and one that found its way to Edinburgh. A reduced edition appeared in 1807.

Now came the turning point of his life, in the publication of *The Hours of Idleness*; for though the volume itself presented a collection, from the very best of which, such as the beautiful stanzas to *Lochnagar*, one would scarcely have ventured to presage the powers reserved for him to exhibit, it was destined to be noticed in the great literary organ of the day, the *Edinburgh Review*, and to be handled in a manner to rouse the energies of the author. It has been often said that the reviewer had a grudge to satisfy, which was apparent, not only in the harsh treatment of so young an aspirant, but in the very circumstance of taking up so apparently a trifle; and probably, notwithstanding disclamations, there was at least political feeling, or democratic ill-nature. At any rate, nothing more auspicious could have occurred to Byron, who, the reverse of John Keats, was as unlikely "to die of an article" as he was likely to make the reviewer die of a satire. Anger collected the scattered beginnings of his strength to a centre where it could be felt. Having studied the satirical poets as models, and collected every available bit of gossip floating at the time, he, in 1809, poured forth his wrath, all the warmer for the nursing he had given it, in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. Pointed in its abusive personalities, and contemptuous, without any discrimination, of all the literary characters of the day, this poem exhibited powers which only wanted maturation to achieve great things, though not so great as he achieved. Yet it is certain that Byron was subsequently ashamed of this satire, not that it was satirical, nor that it was destitute of merit, but rather that the men against whom it was chiefly directed, showed they had the art of heaping coals of fire on his head. On a copy which he perused long after, he wrote the following words:—"The binding of this volume is considerably too valuable for its contents. Nothing but the consideration of its being the property of

another prevents me from consigning this miserable record of misplaced anger and indiscriminate acrimony to the flames." Yet he was at the time engaged in performing an office of the same kind on human nature in general. The man was probably not changed, except that his love of singularity was increased. It is said that when he read the review he drank three bottles of claret at dinner—an act probably genuine enough in sincerity; but when he afterwards regretted his revenge, he could ridicule very sacred conventionalities among mankind. Even his own good fortune did not escape his satire, as when, on coming of age, he celebrated the occasion, and some say the anniversary, by dining on eggs and bacon and a bottle of ale, adding, long afterwards, to the reminiscence, "But as neither of them agrees with me, I never use them but on great jubilees, once in four or five years or so."

Such things, and many other eccentricities subsequently recorded—among the earliest of which was his epitaph on the dog buried at Newstead, wherein he gives the dog a soul and a far higher character than man, the common object of his revilings—all indicate the prevailing error of his mind, pride showing itself in singularity. We have used the word *misanthropy*, but really, as respects Byron, it is altogether misapplied. No man with so susceptible a heart for friendship, and such a relish for the good things of life, nay, a generosity of soul where his affections pointed out the object, could be said to be a genuine misanthrope. It was altogether with him a stage character. In that garb he had conciliated the people till he became an idol, and falsely supposed, that while his idolaters admired him, they also pitied him for the misfortune of being singular and gloomy. Not but that his soul spurned pity in the common sense, only it was a homage to his fate, and he gloried in being under the special dominion of a power which, like the Titans, he at the same time battled against.

There was another reason why Byron persisted in appear-

ing in an aspect not expressing his true nature. His friends blindly took the young lord for what, in his poetry and juvenile escapades, he declared himself to be. They accordingly began early to stand aloof from him. Even Lord Carlisle, his guardian, fell into this error; nor can we have better evidence of this mistake than the fact, that when Lord Byron took his seat in the House of Lords in 1809, there was no one to introduce him, so there was induced an action and a reaction, all the consequents of a false move, and yet increasing on and on to the time of his death. But perhaps the best evidence we can have of the absolute domination of his love of singularity lies in the fact, that, though he often regretted his imprudences, his regret had always the acerbity of a retaliation against the punishment inflicted by those who suffered from the act regretted.

It was, accordingly, under a feeling of something approaching to disgust, that he resolved upon leaving England, on a two years' absence, with Mr Hobhouse, subsequently Lord Broughton. It was in July 1809 that he left Falmouth on this, as it turned out, poetical pilgrimage, in the course of which he visited the Peninsula, extended his travels to Greece and Turkey, and, with his genius now inflamed by romantic objects, composed in great part the first and second parts of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. It may be interesting to trace these wanderings, destined to become, by the publication of the poem in 1812, so famous.

After touching at Lisbon, Cadiz, Gibraltar, and Mal'a, he arrived at Prevesa in Albania, from which he proceeded on a tour through the provinces of Turkey, arriving at Athens. Here he spent a considerable time examining the monuments of ancient philosophy and freedom, which were afterwards to inspire his muse in her most amiable fit. He lived with the English vice-consul, and there met one of his daughters, the celebrated Theresa Macri, so well known as "the Maid of Athens,"—a lady of great beauty, who was afterwards married to Mr Black, a gentleman only known for

his possession of so famous a woman, and of great strength of body. Lord Byron subsequently went to Constantinople, where he accomplished the feat of swimming across the Hellespont, professedly in imitation of Leander in his visit to Hero. Of this feat he might very well be proud, as the distance, though direct not more than a mile, is fully three if you count the effect of the currents; and though he did not come back again, it requires to be remembered that he swam for ambition, not for love of a beautiful woman. After all, the task was nothing to what he accomplished afterwards; for, on this occasion, he was only an hour and ten minutes in the water, whereas, in the Grand Canal of Venice, he was four hours and twenty minutes. He returned to Athens in the month of July, and took some excursions in the Morea, his head-quarters being the monument of Lysicrates, or Lantern of Diogenes,—a building somewhat resembling Dugald Stewart's monument on the Calton Hill of Edinburgh. Here he wrote his satire upon London life, and collected notes for his *Childe Harold*.

In this journey the two years expired. In the meantime, his mother, living at Newstead, was under a presentiment that she would never see him again, although the state of her health did not indicate a near dissolution. Yet so it turned out, in a manner favourably to mystery, and yet not untrue to her character. It would appear that the very preparations she made for his return, hastened the fulfilment of her augury; for the sight of some upholsterers' bills threw her into such a frenzy of passion, that she expired just as Byron was posting to Newstead. He was only in time to bury her. On the occasion of the funeral, a circumstance occurred which can hardly be accounted for, even by a confirmed love of eccentricity, not less, indeed, than by insanity. He did not accompany the remains of his mother to the vault, but stood at the entrance-door of the mansion, looking with unmeaning eyes at the procession; and no sooner had it disappeared, than, putting on a pair of boxing-gloves, he began a

sparring match with a boy-servant, selected on the instant as his antagonist. It is said that if he had not known that this would be recorded, he never would have performed it. Perhaps this may be true, and yet there is a kind of philosophy which would find another cause, if not an excuse. Obedience to grief is natural, but there is a rebellion against what may be called the cruelty of Fate, which is only unnatural, because seldom witnessed. It is quite certain that he lamented bitterly the loss of his parent; for, a few nights before, he was found sitting in the dark by her corpse, and when expostulated with, answered, "O Mrs By., I had but one friend in the world, and she is gone." And about a month afterwards, he is found writing to Mr Murray, "Your letter gives me credit for more acute feelings than I possess; for though I feel tolerably miserable, yet I am at the same time subject to a kind of hysterical merriment, or rather laughter without merriment, which I can neither account for nor conquer." This is an explanation of what appears to be an anomaly, which, in place of being dishonourable to the feelings, however antagonistic to worldly prudence and decorum, may be construed as a weakness overshadowing strength, and producing an abnormal condition of the heart, to which we are witnesses in the case of excitable women every day.

Byron made his first speech in Parliament on 27th February 1812, on the occasion of the Nottingham Frame-breaking Bill; and two days thereafter appeared the two first cantos of *Childe Harold*. It was on the success attending this work that he used the well-known words, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous." He was now twenty-four, and at this early age became the most popular poet that perhaps England ever saw,—and thus, like our Burns as regards Scotland, Byron had a style peculiarly his own, and so unlike that of the reigning favourites, Wordsworth and Coleridge, that the people were delighted with a medium of reaching their hearts free from the obscure philosophy of the one, and the dreamy

metaphysics of the other. He seemed to liberate them from a bondage as their sympathies found play in his clear language, rapid turns, and penetrating flashes. Nor less did his poetry resemble Scott's metrical romances, whose homeliness, if not often heaviness, contrasted unfavourably with the new poet's stirring flow of affections, which, if more conventional, were fresher and more in accordance with modern habits of both thinking and feeling. Even in his tales which came afterwards, Byron charmed away the admirers of his northern rival, whose popularity waned visibly every day.

In rapid succession now came the beautiful fragment *The Giaour*, the less regular *Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, and its sequel *Lara*. During all this period, when his fame culminated, he is represented as being little better than mad; but it was the madness of one who had striven for superiority as a blessing that was to cure his spirit of many ills, and found that his appetite for fame sickened upon what it fed. This is less or more the effect of all ambition; but in Byron it took a strange aspect. On 6th December 1813, appears this entry in his journal:—"This journal is a relief. When I am tired—as I generally am—out comes this, and down goes everything. But I can't read it over; and God knows what contradictions it may contain. If I am severe with myself, (but I fear one lies more near to one's-self than to any one else,) every page should confute, refute, and utterly abjure its predecessor." In a paroxysm, of which the cause is not known, he wrote to his publisher, with an order that all his writings should be immediately destroyed; but on a representation from Mr Murray, he agreed, like a child, to moderate counsel. In 1816, the first and most characteristic portion of Byron's works terminated with *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*.

While thus building up his poetical fame, his domestic history underwent a change. His friends, really anxious for a return on the part of this extraordinary man to those pleasures which can only be found within the precincts of mo-

rality and the domestic *lares*, heard with much satisfaction that he had paid his addresses to the daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke, and with still more, that he had been accepted. Things looked propitious : even the unseen powers seemed to be pleased, if we are to believe that his mother's marriage-ring, which had been lost, was dug up by the gardener at Newstead on the very day Miss Milbanke's acceptance reached the poet. In 1815, they were married. In the same year, Lady Byron bore him a daughter, the Ada so often alluded to by him, and who afterwards married Lord Lovelace. But the marriage proved unhappy ; and in the beginning of 1816, she quitted her husband's house never to return. During the whole of this time, Newstead must have presented an extraordinary scene in many respects. The quarrels have not transpired ; but the pecuniary embarrassments into which Byron had precipitated himself were too open to be hidden. The house was nine times in the possession of bailiffs ; and although Lady Byron had not left, it is certain that Byron himself would have been necessitated again to leave England. His pride was so far humbled, too, that he consented to receive payment for his writings—a kind of remuneration which he had heretofore considered a degradation.

The secret of this difference has long been one of those domestic mysteries calculated to engage the attention of a curious public. It is certain that many attempts were made by friends at reconciliation ; but where the lady was under the impression that her husband was insane, there could be no hope of such a result. In the midst of the confused negotiations it came out that her ladyship condescended on no fewer than sixteen evidences of insanity, but the precise character of these has never come to the public ear, so that the curiosity which ought to have abated with a mere knowledge of the imputation, rather increased. Of course Lord Byron was no more insane than he ever had been. The world is full of such maniacs, who are often, by kind treatment, brought to become passable, even very loving,

husbands. Byron had no fault to find with her, and was ready to embrace the first opportunity of trying to build up again a household peace; but even after the friends of both pronounced for his sanity, the lady took another position still more hopeless—that if he were sane, he was still more objectionable, in so far that his disrespect towards her must have resulted from intention. The truth would appear to be, that she had really never loved him with that affection which is so great a conciliator, smoothing down so many of the asperities of married life, and even changing faults into virtues. The one expression alone of his lordship proves that he was not a marital impossibility,—“I never had, nor can have, any reproach to make to her while with me. Where there is blame, it belongs to myself; and if I cannot redeem it, I must bear it.” The man who wrote this might have been won.

But the lady's part was, of course, taken by the public. An outcry was raised against Byron, who, soon after, left England, never to set foot in it again. His first residence was in the vicinity of Geneva, where the sublime scenery of Switzerland and the sympathies of Shelley contributed to raise his poetic enthusiasm into higher and purer vigour than it had yet attained. The *Prisoner of Chillon* was written here, and also the third canto of *Childe Harold*; but, beyond all, the influence of the surrounding scenery gave birth to *Manfred*, a poem deriving a grandeur from physical *locale* and supernatural imagery which renders it nearly unique in our language. But in the midst of this poetical labour, and it is feared much dissipation, he was not a happy man. There is a melancholy passage in his *Journal* which has been often quoted:—“In all this, recollections of bitterness, and more especially of recent and more home desolation which must accompany me through life, have preyed upon me here, and neither the music of the shepherd, nor the crashing of the avalanche, nor the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest, nor the cloud, have for one moment

lightened the weight upon my heart, nor enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty and the power and the glory around, above, and beneath me." It is questionable how far this melancholy was not due to a condition of the body induced by absurd diet. The horror of obesity still haunted him, and the means he took to diminish it are scarcely credible. "A thin slice of bread," says Moore, "with tea at breakfast, a light vegetable dinner, with a bottle or two of seltzer water, tinged with *vin de grave*, and in the evening a cup of green tea, without milk or sugar, formed the whole of his sustenance. The pangs of hunger he appeased by privately chewing tobacco and smoking cigars." In the end of 1816 he took up his residence in Venice, where he remained for three years, sometimes betaking himself to Rome, and collecting materials for the fourth canto of his great poem. His residence in Venice was shaded by habits which are said to have reached a low and gross debauchery; nor was his connexion, something more lasting than his other loves, with the Countess Guiccioli, though patronised by the husband and brother, any improvement, at least to English feelings. In 1820 he followed the countess and her family to Ravenna, where, through them, he got engaged in political plots, the consequence of which was the banishment of his Italian friends from the Papal States. Pisa then became the abode of the party, where Byron received Mr and Mrs Shelley, and afterwards Mr Leigh Hunt, and where they attempted the unsuccessful periodical, the *Liberal*.

At this stage of his life there occurs a touching incident. It happened that a young lady in Hastings made an entry in her diary, containing a solemn prayer for one very clearly pointed out as Lord Byron. She afterwards married a Mr Sheppard, in Dorsetshire, and died in 1819. Two years afterwards, that gentleman, who had seen the entry, wrote to Lord Byron with a pious communication. Byron returned a prompt answer, allowing the advantage believers

have over unbelievers, and saying that his scepticism was a necessity of his nature, yet almost hoping that he would be like Maupertius and Henry Kirke White, who began in infidelity and ended with a firm belief. It is to be feared that this hope was never realised.

While in Italy, Byron's poetical vein flowed freely. In addition to *Manfred* and the last canto of *Childe Harold*, and several works rather poor, he produced *Mazeppa*, *The Lament of Tasso*, and his dramas, which, with the exception of *Cain*, showed signs of moral improvement, though rather a falling-off of poetical vigour. Though possessed of no great versatility, he had a vein for a grotesque humour, something of the Italian cast, approaching the ludicrous, yet admitting freely of exquisite descriptions. His first attempt in this direction was *Beppo*, with its ethical looseness, pervading, like a crawling serpent among flowers, very noble poetry. The same remarks apply to *Don Juan*. As connected with this phase of his character, we may notice that he had always exhibited a tendency to practical joking. Witness the present of a Bible he made to Mr Murray, and of which that gentleman was so proud—showing it to his friends—until he discovered that Byron had put his pen through the word "*robber*," in the sentence, "Now Barabbas was a robber," and replaced it by "*publisher*." All this is very alien from a character of sullen misanthropy. Timon never jokes!

Byron left Pisa in 1822, in consequence of a quarrel with some official, and also because the Guiccioli were ordered to quit the territories of Tuscany. He rejoined them in Genoa. In the meantime Shelley had been drowned, and soon after a field of activity was opened to him of a new kind. The London Committee of Philhellenes requested him to take part in the emancipation of Greece, and he enthusiastically accepted the invitation. Sailing from Genoa in 1823, he arrived soon after at Cephalonia, where he began his patriotic exertions. In January 1824 he landed at Missolonghi. He

was now labouring under illness, which he had aggravated by bathing in the sea during his prior voyage. The great object of his expedition was fraught with disappointment to one who had sung of Greece as Greece once was. His health was further injured by imprudent exposure to cold in an unhealthy climate, and by many anxieties which he never expressed. He perhaps treated himself unwisely; having a great antipathy to obesity, he was always endeavouring to reduce it. In Greece he lived upon dry bread, vegetables, and cheese; and to notice the effect of his dietetics, he used to measure his wrist and waist every morning, taking medicine if he found an increase. On the 9th of April he got wet through, and fever and rheumatic pains came on. On the 18th he got up and attempted to read, but shortly became faint and returned to bed. He died of this fever, with, it is supposed, its accompanying inflammation of the heart, on the following day. It is said that a thunderstorm broke over the town at the moment of his decease—a clear sign to the Greeks that the prodigies of their old country are not yet ended. His remains were taken to England, and interred in the family vault in the church of Hucknall.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BYRON.

THE PRISONER OF CHILLON.

My hair is gray, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears ;
My limbs are bow'd, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are bann'd, and barr'd—forbidden fare ;
But this was for my father's faith
I suffer'd chains and courted death ;
That father perish'd at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake ;
And for the same his lineal race
In darkness found a dwelling-place ;
We were seven—who now are one,
Six in youth and one in age,
Finish'd as they had begun,
Proud of Persecution's rage ;
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have seal'd ;
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied ;
Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB'S HOST AT JERUSALEM.

“ The Lord sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria : so he returned with shame of face to his own land.”—2 CHRON. xxxii. 21.

THE Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold ;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest, when summer is green,
That host, with their banners, at sunset were seen :
Like the leaves of the forest, when autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.



My hair is gray, but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears



For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
 And breathed on the face of the foe as he pass'd ;
 And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
 And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still !

And there lay the steed, with his nostril all wide,
 But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride ;
 And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
 And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
 With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail ;
 The tents were all silent, the banners alone,
 The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
 And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal ;
 And the might of the Gentile, uns mote by the sword,
 Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord !

REMORSE.

THE mind that broods o'er guilty woes,
 Is like the scorpion girt by fire ;
 In circle narrowing as it glows,
 The flames around their captive close,
 Till inly search'd by thousand throes,
 And maddening in her ire,
 One sad and sole relief she knows,
 The sting she nourish'd for her foes,
 Whose venom never yet was vain,
 Gives but one pang, and cures all pain,
 And darts into her desperate brain :
 So do the dark in soul expire,
 Or live like scorpion girt by fire ;
 So writhes the mind Remorse hath riven,
 Unfit for earth, undoom'd for heaven ;
 Darkness above, despair beneath,
 Around it flame, within it death.

HUMAN LIFE.

BETWEEN two worlds Life hovers like a star,
 'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge ;
 How little do we know that which we are !
 How less what we may be ! the eternal surge
 Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
 Our bubbles ; as the old burst, new emerge,
 Lash'd from the foam of ages, while the graves
 Of empires heave but like some passing waves.

IMAGE OF WAR.

HARK! heard you not those hoofs of dreadful note?
 Sounds not the clang of conflict on the heath?
 Saw ye not whom the reeking sabre smote;
 Nor saved your brethren ere they sank beneath
 Tyrants and tyrants' slaves?—the fires of death,
 The bale-fires flash on high: from rock to rock
 Each volley tells that thousands cease to breathe;
 Death rides upon the sulphury siroc,
 Red Battle stamps his foot, and nations feel the shock.

Lo! where the giant on the mountain stands,
 His blood-red tresses deep'ning in the sun,
 With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,
 And eye that scorcheth all it glares upon.
 Restless it rolls, now fix'd, and now anon
 Flashing afar—and at his iron feet
 Destruction cowers to mark what deeds are done;
 For on this morn three potent nations meet,
 To shed before his shrine the blood he deems most sweet.

MORAL REFLECTIONS ON A HUMAN SKULL.

LOOK on its broken arch, its ruin'd wall,
 Its chambers desolate, and portals foul:
 Yes, this was once Ambition's airy hall,
 The dome of Thought, the palace of the Soul:
 Behold through each lack-lustre, eyeless hole,
 The gay recess of Wisdom and of Wit,
 And Passion's host, that never brook'd control:
 Can all saint, sage, or sophist ever writ,
 People this lonely tower, this tenement reft?

SOLITUDE.

To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,
 To slowly trace the forest's shady scene,
 Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
 And mortal foot hath ne'er, or rarely been;
 To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
 With the wild flock that never needs a fold;
 Alone o'er steep and foaming falls to lean;
 This is not solitude; 'tis but to hold
 C converse with Nature's charms, and see her stores unroll'd.

But 'midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men,
 To hear, to see, to feel, and to possess,
 And roam along, the world's tired denizen,
 With none who bless us, none whom we can bless;
 Minions of splendour shrinking from distress!
 None that with kindred consciousness endued,
 If we were not, would seem to smile the less,
 Of all that flatter'd, follow'd, sought, and sued:
 This is to be alone; this, this is solitude!

SLEEP.

THE crowd are gone, the revellers at rest:—
 The courteous host, and all-approving guest,
 Again to that accustom'd couch must creep,
 Where joy subsides, and sorrow sighs to sleep;
 And man, o'er-labour'd with his being's strife,
 Shrinks to that sweet forgetfulness of life.
 There lie Love's feverish hope and Cunning's guile,
 Hate's working brain, and lull'd Ambition's wile;
 O'er each vain eye Oblivion's pinions wave,
 And quench'd Existence crouches in a grave:—
 What better name may slumber's bed become?
 Night's sepulchre, the universal home,
 Where weakness, strength, vice, virtue sunk supine,
 Alike in naked helplessness recline;
 Glad for a while to heave unconscious breath,
 Yet wake to wrestle with the dread of death,
 And shun, though day but dawn on ills increased,
 That sleep, the loveliest, since it dreams the least.

SPLENDOUR OF MORNING.

NIGHT wanes—the vapours round the mountains curl'd,
 Melt into morn, and light awakes the world;
 Man has another day to swell the past,
 And lead him near to little, but his last;
 But mighty Nature bounds as from her birth;
 The sun is in the heavens, and life on earth;
 Flowers in the valley, splendour in the beam,
 Health on the gale, and freshness in the stream.
 Immortal man! behold her glories shine,
 And cry, exulting inly, "They are mine!"
 Gaze on, while yet thy gladden'd eye may see;
 A morrow comes when they are not for thee;
 And grieve what may above thy senseless bier,
 Nor earth nor sky will yield a single tear;
 Nor cloud shall gather more, nor leaf shall fall,
 Nor gale breathe forth one sigh for thee, for all;
 But creeping things shall revel in their spoil,
 And fit thy clay to fertilise the soil.

THE OCEAN.

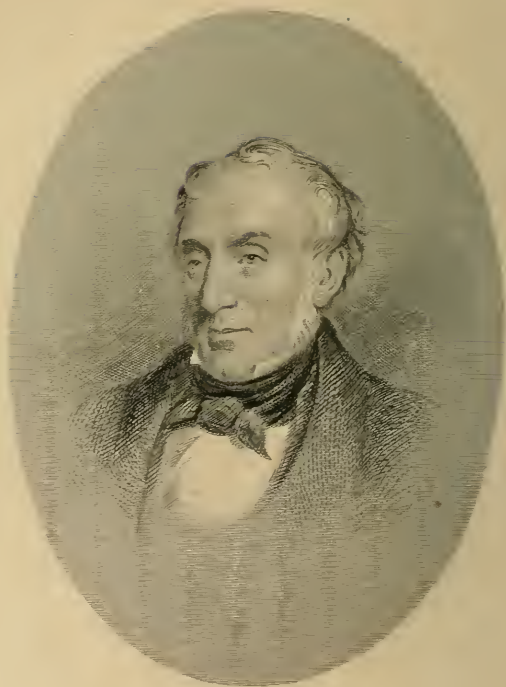
ROLL on, thou deep and dark blue ocean—roll !
 Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain ;
 Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
 Stops with the shore ; upon the watery plain
 The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
 A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
 When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
 He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
 Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths,—thy fields
 Are not a spoil for him,—thou dost arise
 And shake him from thee ; the vile strength he wields
 For earth's destruction, thou dost all despise,
 Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,
 And send'st him, shivering, in thy playful spray,
 And howling, to his gods, where haply lies
 His petty hope in some near port or bay,
 And dashest him again to earth : there let him lay.

The armaments which thunder-strike the walls
 Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
 And monarchs tremble in their capitals ;
 The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
 Their clay creator the vain title take
 Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war ;
 These are thy toys, and as the snowy flake,
 They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
 Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
 Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they ?
 Thy waters wasted them while they were free,
 And many a tyrant since ; their shores obey
 The stranger, slave, or savage ; their decay
 Has dried up realms to deserts :—not so thou,
 Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play—
 Time writes no wrinkle on thy azure brow—
 Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
 Glasses itself in tempests ; in all time,
 Calm or convulsed—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
 Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
 Dark-heaving ; boundless, endless, and sublime—
 The image of eternity—the throne
 Of the Invisible ; even from out thy slime
 The monsters of the deep are made ; each zone
 Obeys thee ; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.



William Wedderburn

WORDSWORTH.

THE life "of him that uttered nothing base," whose brows, in the language of his successor, made greener the laurate's crown, presents little of incident or adventure. It was a quiet home-life, finding scope enough for its physical and intellectual energies in walks amid the mountains and the glens of its native Cumberland, in the contemplation of tree and flower, purling brook and glassy lake, and in the companionship of a devoted intelligent sister, and an attached and sensible wife—

"A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food."

Of him, more than of most poets, it may be said his poetry was his life; his whole heart and soul were in his verse, and no one reading that carefully can fail to mistake his character. The details of his life, as well as its general features, are in his writings, for, as Horace said of Lucilius, he confided all his secrets to his lyre—"to it he communicated his feelings and his thoughts on every occasion of interest, public and private." His works are, in fact, a poetical autobiography, the dates of events alone being needed to render it perfectly complete; and in a few brief sentences the poet himself supplied the early portion of those dates, shortly before his death, to his nephew, whom he desired to write such notice of his life as should serve to illustrate his poems.

From his own short communication, and from facts gleaned from other sources by his biographer, we learn that William

Wordsworth, the most distinguished metaphysical poet whom the world has seen, and whose influence may be said to have quite changed the character of the poetical literature of his own country, was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland, April 7, 1770. On both sides he was descended from a good old stock. In the curious little Yorkshire village of Penistone, to which even the railway has failed to carry life save on market-days, the name of Wordsworth was familiar, probably before the era of William the Conqueror; and a name of note it was, too, if we might judge from the frequency with which it appears in the early annals of the parish. The subject of this memoir himself possessed a carved almary, made in 1525, at the expense of a William Wordsworth; and this relic carried the family pedigree four generations further back in the world's history than the date of its carving. His mother was daughter to one William Cookson, a mercer in Penrith, whose wife, again, was a Crackanthorp, whose family had resided at Newbiggen Hall in Westmoreland since the days of the third Edward. The father of the poet was in a good position, being law-agent to Sir James Lowther, who was afterwards Lord Lonsdale. William Wordsworth was the second son, and he had two brothers and a sister, (the last his close companion through life,) younger than himself.

The place of Wordsworth's birth was one well calculated to arouse poetic feelings. The picturesque streams of the Derwent and the Cocker meet and mingle near the spot where the ruins of the ancient castle frown down over the quaint little town; and Wordsworth, though but a mere child when he wandered along the banks of the meandering river, or stood in the shadow of the broken battlements, felt the inspiration of the scene. As he has beautifully said—

“One, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And from his fords and shallows sent a voice
That flow'd along my dreams.”

Wordsworth's mother died of consumption before he had completed his eighth year.

"Early died
My honour'd mother, she who was the heart
And hinge of all our learnings and our loves.
She left us destitute."

And ere he had reached his fourteenth year, his father, through the effects of a cold caught during a night's exposure on the mountains, was laid beside her in the grave.

One can scarcely realise that the calm, meditative, gravely-philosophical bard of Rydal Mount was a pert, froward, ill-tempered boy, such as to give his wise and pious mother more concern than all her other children. She was sagacious enough to note that the boy had in him the making of a remarkable man, and her anxiety was as to whether his genius would unfold itself for good or for evil; and she would seem at times to have been almost afraid that the latter would predominate. "The cause of this," as Wordsworth informed his nephew, "was that I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper; so much so that I remember going once into the attics of my grandfather's house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with the intention of destroying myself with one of the foils which I knew was kept there. I took the foil in hand, but my heart failed." It was lucky for the world that the little rascal's physical nature did recoil from the contact of the cold bright steel, that the warm life-blood rushed swift from the citadel of the heart through all the avenues of the body, protesting against the foul outrage and awful crime which the rebellious spirit meditated. What the poetry of this century would have been without the Wordsworthian influence, which, as the incident shows, was nearly extinguished in embryo, it is difficult to estimate with anything like exactitude, but one thing is quite certain, it would have been neither as natural nor as healthy as it is. Of the poet's passion for wanton ill-doing, when a boy, we have another

instance. "Upon another occasion, while I was at my grandfather's house at Penrith, along with my eldest brother Richard, we were whipping tops together in the large drawing-room, on which the carpet was only laid down on particular occasions. The walls were hung round with family pictures, and I said to my brother, 'Dare you strike your whip through that old lady's petticoat?' He replied, 'No, I won't.' 'Then,' said I, 'here goes,' and I struck my lash through her hooped petticoat, for which, no doubt, I was properly punished. But, possibly from some want of judgment in punishments inflicted, I had become perverse and obstinate in defying chastisement, and rather proud of it than otherwise." And the relics of this early ill-temper still remained after age had silvered the brown locks o'er, and would sometimes break out impetuously, and at the most unfitting opportunities, through the general philosophic calm of the poet's life. While Wordsworth was yet alive, De Quincey, with somewhat questionable taste, referred to two occasions on which the poet's peevishness and ill-humour to those of his own household were made manifest even before strangers; and hints that if Mrs Wordsworth had not been unusually sweet-tempered, the domestic hearth at Rydal Mount would not have been without unseemly bickerings. But De Quincey being a little spiteful, it is well to accept such statements with caution.

Up to his mother's death, Wordsworth appears to have spent his time partly at Cockermouth and partly at Penrith, at which latter place his maternal grand-parents resided. Here he appears to have received the rudiments of education in one of those very primitive institutions which pass under the name of Dame's schools, the conductress of which appears to have been a kind, homely sort of person, whose system of instruction neither rose above nor sunk below that of her class in general.

In his ninth year, Wordsworth was removed to Hawkshead on the borders of Lancashire, where there was a good

grammar-school of a couple of centuries' standing. The foundation did not provide for the lodgment of pupils in the building, and the boys attending the school were mostly lodged with "dames" in the village. Wordsworth was fortunate in being placed under the care of a most affectionate and motherly person named Anne Tyson, whose kind attentions he gratefully remembered and commemorated in the *Prelude*. The supervision exercised over the boys out of school by the masters at Hawkshead does not appear to have been very strict, and the lads on many occasions often followed their games of hunting, skating, rowing, &c., far on into the night. Such a training, if not perhaps the best for making a scholar, was certainly one well calculated to promote the nascent faculties of a poetic youth. And to such a one the scene was quite as congenial as Cockermouth. Hawkshead lies in the peaceful Vale of Esthwaite, little more than a quarter of a mile from the lake of that name, upon which, in winter nights, the swift skates of the school-boys—Wordsworth's among the swiftest of all—"hissed along the polished ice in games confederate," and not very far from those of Windermere and Coniston. Though comparatively tame in itself, Hawkshead was in the centre of great natural attractions. "The gorgeous scenery of Borrowdale, the austere sublimities of Wastdalehead, of Langdalehead or Mardale—these are almost too oppressive in their colossal proportions and their utter solitudes for encouraging a perfectly human interest. Now, taking Hawkshead as a centre, with a radius of about eight miles, one might describe a little circular tract which embosoms a perfect network of little valleys, separate wards, or cells, as it were, of one larger valley, walled in by the great leading mountains of the region, Grasmere, Easedale, Great and Little Langdale, Tilberthwaite, Yewdale, Elter Water, Loughrigg Tarn, Skelwith, and many other quiet nooks, lie within a single division of this labyrinthine district—all these are within one summer afternoon's ramble. And amongst these,

for the years of his boyhood, lay the daily excursions of Wordsworth." The impressions produced on Wordsworth by the scenery surrounding Hawkshead were never forgotten—they remained in his memory for ever fresh as when he beheld them, and in many a verse he presents them with a natural truthfulness and force which make the lonely student in his room feel as if the mountain breeze were rippling in his hair, as if the wavelets of the glassy lake were dancing at his very feet, and before his eyes the sunlight lying in broad bright streaks upon the hill-sides.

At Hawkshead, Wordsworth appears to have remained until about his eighteenth year, learning only comparatively little Latin and somewhat less Greek; the works of Fielding, Swift, Cervantes, Goldsmith, Pope, and Gray being greatly more to his taste than dry school-books. In 1787, he was entered at St John's College, Cambridge; but during the four sessions he remained at the university there he in no way distinguished himself, nor, indeed, sought to do so, his apathy being a source of great chagrin to his uncles. Here, as at Hawkshead, he devoted himself more assiduously to the poets than to the schoolmen. His Cambridge residence had little influence upon his poetry; it had, like Cocker-mouth and Hawkshead, no pleasant memories for him, being altogether too constrained an existence for such a genuine child of nature as Wordsworth was. Instead of working at the abstruse mathematics for which his *alma mater* is famous, Wordsworth gave himself much up to desultory reading, and to the study of Italian. While yet at Hawkshead he had tried his poetic wings in a memorial ode, which was chiefly remarkable as a very good imitation of Pope; and now at Cambridge he began to look upon himself as a poet, but of a different school from that which the poet of Twickenham made famous. And even at this time he had too profound a sense of the dignity of the poet's calling to condescend to write a complimentary poem about one of the authorities of the college,—thus missing, much to his uncle's disgust, the

chance of distinguishing himself, and so of forwarding his worldly prospects.

During the vacation of 1790, he visited France with a Mr Jones, a fellow-collegian, and had all his sympathies enlisted in favour of the Girondist party of the French Revolution, then in its full tide of progress. In the beginning of the following year, he took his degree, and after spending a short time in London, he went over to France, where he resided, partly at Blois, Orleans, and Paris, for about thirteen months, showing such active sympathy, and maintaining such intimate relations with some of the leading Girondists, that it is not improbable his career might have been cut short by the guillotine, had he not been obliged to return to England a little before King Louis suffered death.

During the next three years, Wordsworth seems to have lived in a somewhat aimless fashion among his friends in London and elsewhere, and not very welcomely, as they were annoyed at him making no effort to support himself either by going into the church or by qualifying himself for the bar.

In 1793, he published *An Evening Walk*, and *Descriptive Sketches*, which fell almost still-born from the press, but there were a few men who recognised the genius evinced in the verses; among the rest, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who remarked concerning them, that "seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetical genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced."

In 1795, a young gentleman named Calvert, whose death-bed Wordsworth had attended, left him £900 as a token of his admiration of Wordsworth's poetic talent, expressing a desire that Wordsworth should devote himself entirely to the Muses. On this small sum Wordsworth and his sister, who now became his constant companion, and whose influence on his life and poetry is incalculable, contrived to live for seven years. When this sum was about exhausted, Lord Lonsdale, whose predecessor had failed to make good the just claims of £5000, which Wordsworth's father had against

the Lonsdale estates at his death, paid the principal with interest, which amounted to £8500, and this was divided between the five children, and so the poet was once more placed above the fear of want, without having to labour. Wordsworth, throughout his life, was singularly fortunate in getting increase of wealth just at the very time he was needing it. De Quincey, with much quiet humour, relates some half-dozen instances in which the poet, almost at the very moment when more money became necessary, had it placed within his reach. In 1795, Wordsworth and his sister took a nice cottage near Crewkerne in Dorsetshire, in a beautiful and romantic country, such as poets love; and in August 1797, they removed to Alfoxden, Nether Stowey, Somersetshire, to be near Coleridge. During his residence at the first-named place, Wordsworth wrote his *Salisbury Plain*, and the tragedy of the *Borderers*; and at Alfoxden he composed the *Lyrical Ballads*, which were brought out by the distinguished provincial bookseller, Joseph Cottle of Bristol. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* was published in the collection, which did not sell. The poets, however, calmly conscious of their own powers, appear to have been little affected by the inappreciation of the public. In 1798-9, the two travelled together in Germany, and in the latter year Wordsworth settled down at Grasmere. This retreat was still lovelier and more picturesque than any he had yet settled at. "From the gorge of Hammerscar, the whole vale of Grasmere suddenly breaks upon the view in a style of almost theatrical surprise, with its lovely valley stretching before the eye in the distance, the lake lying immediately below, with its solemn ark-like island of four-and-a-half acres in size, seemingly floating on its surface, and its exquisite outline on the opposite shore, revealing all its little bays and wild sylvan margin, feathered to the edge with wild-flowers and ferns. In one quarter, a little wood, stretching for about half-a-mile towards the outlet of the lake; more directly in opposition to the spectator, a few green fields, and beyond them, just

two bow-shots from the water, a little white cottage gleaming from the midst of trees, with a vast and seemingly never-ending series of ascents, rising above it to the height of more than three thousand feet. That little cottage was Wordsworth's from the time of his marriage, and earlier, in fact, from the beginning of the century to the year 1808." Afterwards it belonged to De Quincey.

In 1802 Wordsworth visited France, and on his return married Mary Hutchinson, whom he had known from childhood.

De Quincey thus describes Mrs Wordsworth as he saw her on his first visit, in the winter of 1807-8 :—

"A tallish young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her countenance, advanced to me, presenting her hand with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs Wordsworth, cousin of the poet, and, for the last five years or more, his wife. She was now mother of two children, a son and a daughter ; and she furnished a remarkable proof how possible it is for a woman neither handsome nor even comely, according to the rigour of criticism—nay, generally pronounced very plain—to exercise all the practical fascination of beauty, through the mere compensatory charms of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements. *Words*, I was going to have added—but her words were few. In reality she talked so little, that Mr Slave-Trade Clarkson used to allege against her, that she could only say, '*God bless you!*' Certainly her intellect was not of an active order ; but, in a quiescent, reposing, meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts."

Of Wordsworth himself the same author draws the following likeness :—

"He was, upon the whole, not a well-made man. His legs were pointedly condemned by all female connoisseurs in

legs; not that they were bad in any way which *would* force itself upon your notice; there was no absolute deformity about them; and undoubtedly they had been serviceable legs, beyond the average standard of human requisition; for I calculate upon good data, that with these identical legs, Wordsworth must have traversed a distance of 175,000 to 180,000 English miles—a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of alcohol and all other stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits. But useful as they have proved themselves, the Wordsworthian legs were certainly not ornamental; and it was really a pity, as I agreed with a lady in thinking, that he had not another pair for evening-dress parties—when no boots lend their friendly aid to mask our imperfections from the eyes of female rigorists. A sculptor would certainly have disapproved of their contour. But the worst part of Wordsworth's person was the bust; there was a narrowness and a droop about the shoulders which became striking, and had an effect of meanness when brought into close juxtaposition with a figure of a more statesque build. And yet Wordsworth was of a good height, (five feet ten,) and not a slender man; on the contrary, by the side of Southey, his limbs looked thick almost in a disproportionate degree. But the total effect of Wordsworth's person was always worst in a state of motion. Meantime, his face—that was one which would have made amends for greater defects of figure. Many such, and finer, I have seen among the portraits of Titian, and, in a later period, amongst those of Vandyke, from the great era of Charles I., as also from the Court of Elizabeth and of Charles II., but none which has more impressed me in my own time. Wordsworth's forehead—the real living forehead, as I have been in the habit of seeing it for more than five-and-twenty years, is not remarkable for its height, but it is perhaps remarkable for its breadth and expansive development. Neither are the eyes of Wordsworth 'large,' as is erroneously stated somewhere in 'Peter's Letters;' on the contrary, they are (I think) rather small; but

that does not interfere with their effect, which at times is fine, and suitable to his intellectual character. His eyes are not, under any circumstances, bright, lustrous, or piercing; but after a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear. The light which resides in them is at no time a superficial light; but, under favourable accidents, it is a light which seems to come from unfathomed depths; in fact, it is more truly entitled to be held 'the light that never was on sea or shore,' a light radiating from some far spiritual world, than any, the most idealising, that ever yet a painter's hand created. The nose a little arched, and large, which has always been accounted an unequivocal expression of animal appetites organically strong. And that expressed the simple truth; Wordsworth's intellectual passions were fervent and strong; but they rested upon a basis of preternatural animal sensibility, diffused through *all* the animal passions or appetites; and something of that will be found to hold of all poets who have been great by original force and power. The mouth and the whole circumjacent features of the mouth composed the strongest feature in Wordsworth's face; there was nothing specially to be noticed that I know of in the mere outline of the lips; but the swell and protrusion of the parts above and around the mouth are both noticeable in themselves, and also because they remind me (De Quincey) of a portrait of Milton, whose excellence was attested by the Blind Bard's daughter."

Wordsworth was so like Milton in personal appearance that De Quincey, in another place, says that Richardson's head of the great author of *Paradise Lost* "presented not only by far the best likeness of Wordsworth, but of Wordsworth in the prime of his powers. . . . Not one member of that (the Wordsworthian) family but was as much impressed as myself with the accuracy of the likeness. All the peculiarities even were retained—a drooping appearance of the eyelids, that remarkable swell which I have noticed about

the mouth, the way in which the hair lay upon the forehead. In two points only there was a deviation from the rigorous truth of Wordsworth's features—the face was a little too short and too broad, and the eyes were too large."

By his wife Wordsworth had five children—John, born in 1803; Dora, 1804; Thomas, 1806; Catherine, 1808; and William, 1810. Thomas and Catherine died when they were children, and his beloved daughter, Dora, died in 1847.

In 1808, Wordsworth removed to Allan Bank, a house within the same district as the one he left; and, in 1813, he changed to Rydal Mount, still in the region of his beloved lakes and hills, where he remained until the day of his death. From the time of his marriage to his taking up house at Rydal Mount, he had to fight his hardest battle with the critics; the most powerful of whom, perhaps, was Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*. But the heavy hitting of the reviewer and the clever ridicule of the brothers Smith were in the end forced to give way to the earnestness, the truth, beauty, and force of the teachings and the descriptions of the despised "Lakers," of whom Wordsworth was the chief. All men of taste and ability in the end grew ashamed of laughing at that which they could not but acknowledge bore the impress and breathed the spirit of nature, and freeing themselves by degrees from the chains of the artificialism in which the genius of Pope had fettered them, at last stood confessed admirers and advocates of the new school of poetry. There was, however, at least one critic who recognised from the first the excellence of the Wordsworthian verse, and who was not slow to express his opinion—that critic was the late Professor John Wilson, (Christopher North.)

In one of his later essays, when Wordsworth—thanks in no small measure to Wilson—was beginning to grow famous, the latter thus writes of him:—"We believe that Wordsworth's genius has now a greater influence on the spirit of poetry in Britain than was ever exercised by any individual

mind. He was the first man who impregnated all his descriptions of external nature with sentiment and passion. In this he has been followed—often successfully—by two poets. He was the first man that vindicated the native dignity of human nature, by showing that all her elementary feelings were capable of poetry—and in that, too, he has been followed by other true poets, although here he stands, and probably ever will stand, unapproached. He was the first man that stripped thought and passion of all vain or foolish disguises, and showed them in their just proportions and unencumbered power. He was the first man who, in poetry, knew the real province of language, and suffered it not to veil the meanings of the spirit. In all these things—and in many more—Wordsworth is indisputably the most original poet of the age; and it is impossible in the very nature of things that he ever can be eclipsed.”

In 1800, a second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, with numerous additions, was published in two volumes; and editions of the same work were also issued in 1802 and 1805. Two years after the last-mentioned date, he published *Poems* in two volumes; and in 1809, an *Essay on the Convention of Cintra*. Meanwhile he was labouring industriously upon that great philosophical poem which was never finished, but of which the *Prelude* and the *Excursion* are magnificent fragments. The latter appeared in 1814, but not until after his death was the *Prelude* given to the world, though it is understood that it was completed as early as 1805. Of works published subsequently to the *Excursion*, 1815, may be mentioned the *White Doe of Rylstone*, *Laodamia*, *Dion*, *Ode to Lycoris*, &c., 1814, 1816, and 1817, respectively; *Peter Bell*, *The Waggoner*, *Sonnets on the River Duddon*, all about 1819; and *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, and *Yarrow Revisited*, later.

The whole of his poems were afterwards classified and published in six volumes by the author, as poems referring to the period of childhood; poems founded on the affections; poems of the fancy; poems of the imagination, &c. On the

death of Southey, in 1843, the Lord Chamberlain wrote to Wordsworth informing him that he had recommended the Queen to appoint him (Wordsworth) as successor to his late friend, and that her Majesty had approved the recommendation. Wordsworth, however, declined the high honour on the ground that it entailed duties too onerous for one of his advanced age. In two days after, the Lord Chamberlain wrote again, pressing the appointment upon him, and he was backed up by a letter from Sir Robert Peel, then Prime Minister, who remarked :—"The offer was made to you by the Lord Chamberlain with my entire concurrence, not for the purpose of imposing on you any onerous or disagreeable duties, but in order to pay you that tribute of respect which is justly due to the first of living poets. The Queen entirely approved of the nomination, and there is a unanimous feeling on the part of all who have heard of the proposal, (and it is pretty generally known,) that there could not be a question about the selection. Do not be deterred by the fear of any obligations which the appointment may be supposed to imply. I will undertake that you shall have nothing *required* from you." It was, of course, impossible to resist such flattering appeals, and Wordsworth accepted the bays, with the pension of £300 a-year which came along with them. It was well, however, that he had accepted the laureate's crown on the condition that he was to be exempted from the responsibilities it had formerly entailed, as he seldom, almost never, struck the lyre after the honour was conferred upon him.

He died on the 23d of April 1850 from the effects of a cold caught on the 10th of March,—“passing away almost insensibly, exactly at twelve o'clock, while the cuckoo-clock was striking the hour.” Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*, has given an estimate of his poetical character, which, as applying to the mass of his poems, is so just and true, as well as so felicitously expressed, that we prefer transcribing it, as a finish to this necessarily brief sketch, to making any remarks of our own :—

"*First*, An austere purity of language, both grammatically and logically ; in short, a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning. *Secondly*, A correspondent weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won, not from books, but from the poet's own meditations. They are fresh, and have the dew upon them. Even throughout his smaller poems, there is not one which is not rendered valuable by some just and original reflection. *Thirdly*, The sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs ; the frequent *curiosa felicitas* of his diction. *Fourthly*, The perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions, as taken immediately from nature, and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives a physiognomic expression to all the works of nature. *Fifthly*, A meditative pathos—a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility ; a sympathy with man as man ; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator rather than a fellow-sufferer and co-mate, (*spectator, haud particeps*,) but of a contemplation from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature ; no injuries of wind, or weather, or toil, or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine. *Last*, And pre-eminently, I challenge for the poet the gift of imagination in the highest sense of the word. In the play of *fancy*, Wordsworth, to my feelings, is always graceful and recondite. The *likeness* is occasionally too strange, or demands too peculiar a point of view, or is such as appears the creature of predetermined research, rather than spontaneous presentation. Indeed, his fancy seldom displays itself as mere unmodified fancy. But in imaginative power he stands nearest of all modern writers to Shakespeare and Milton, and yet in a mind perfectly unborrowed, and his own. To employ his own words, which are at once an instance and an illustration, he does indeed, to all thoughts and to all objects,

‘Add the gleam,
The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet's dream.’”

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF WORDSWORTH.

THE PEDLAR.

WHAT wonder, then, if I whose favourite school
Hath been the fields, the roads, and rural lanes,
Look'd on this guide with reverential love?
Each with the other pleased, we now pursued
Our journey—beneath favourable skies.
Turn wheresoe'er we would, he was a light
Unfailing : not a hamlet could we pass,
Rarely a house, that did not yield to him
Remembrances ; or from his tongue call forth
Some way-beguiling tale.
Nor was he loath to enter ragged huts,
Huts where his charity was blest ; his voice
Heard as the voice of an experienced friend.
And sometimes where the poor man held dispute
With his own mind, unable to subdue
Impatience, through inaptness to perceive
General distress in his particular lot ;
Or cherishing resentment, or in vain
Struggling against it, with a soul perplex'd,
And finding in herself no steady power
To draw the line of comfort that divides
Calamity, the chastisement of Heaven,
From the injustice of our brother men ;
To him appeal was made as to a judge ;
Who, with an understanding heart, allay'd
The perturbation ; listen'd to the plea ;
Resolved the dubious point ; and sentence gave
So grounded, so applied, that it was heard
With soften'd spirit—e'en when it condemn'd.

WE ARE SEVEN.

A SIMPLE child
That lightly draws its breath
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death ?

I met a little cottage girl :
She was eight years old, she said ;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That cluster'd round her head.



Turn wheresoe'er we would, he was a light
 Unfading : not a hamlet could we pass.
 Rarely a house, that did not yie d to him
 Remembrances ; or from his tongue cam forth
 Some way-bequiling tale.
 Nor was he loath to enter ragged huts,
 Huts where his charity was blest.



She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad;
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
Her beauty made me glad.

"Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering look'd at me.

"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answer'd, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

"Two of us in the churchyard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And in the churchyard cottage I
Dwell near them with my mother."

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven!—I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be?"

Then did the little maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
Beneath the churchyard tree."

"You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit—
I sit and sing to them.

"And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

"The first that died was little Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

"So in the churchyard she was laid ;
And all the summer dry,
Together round her grave we play'd,
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"
The little maiden did reply,
"O master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead;
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away: for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

NUTTING.

It was a day,
One of those heavenly days which cannot die,
When forth I sallied from our cottage-door,
And with a wallet o'er my shoulder slung,
A nutting crook in hand, I turn'd my steps
Towards the distant woods, a figure quaint,
Trick'd out in proud disguise of beggar's weeds
Put on for the occasion, by advice
And exhortation of my frugal dame.
Motley accoutrements! of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, and in truth
More ragged than need was. Among the woods,
And o'er the pathless rocks, I forced my way,
Until, at length, I came to one dear nook,
Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Droop'd with its wither'd leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation, but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,
A virgin scene!—A little while I stood,
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet, or beneath the trees I sate
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I play'd:
A temper known to those who, after long
And weary expectation, have been bless'd
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.—
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves

The violets of five seasons reappear
 And fade, unseen by any human eye ;—
 Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
 For ever ;—I saw the sparkling foam,
 And with my cheek on one of those green stones,
 That, fleeced with moss, beneath the shady trees,
 Lay round me scatter'd like a flock of sheep,
 I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
 In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
 Tribute to ease ; and, of its joy secure,
 The heart luxuriates with indifferent things ;
 Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
 And dragg'd to earth both branch and bough, with crash
 And merciless ravage ; and the shady nook
 Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower
 Deform'd and sullied, patiently gave up
 Their quiet being : and unless I now
 Confound my present feelings with the past,
 Even then, when from the bower I turn'd away,
 Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
 I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
 The silent trees and the intruding sky.

Then, dearest maiden, move along these shades
 In gentleness of heart, with gentle hand
 Touch,—for there is a Spirit in the woods.

THE STARS.

THE stars are mansions built by nature's hand ;
 The sun is peopled ; and with spirits blest,
 Say, can the gentle moon be unpossess'd ?
 Huge ocean shows, within his yellow strand,
 A habitation marvellously plann'd,
 For life to occupy in love and rest ;
 All that we see is dome, or vault, or nest,
 Or fort, erected at her sage command.
 Is this a vernal thought ? Ev'n so, the spring
 Gave it while cares were weighing on my heart,
 'Mid song of birds, and insects murmuring ;
 And while the youthful year's prolific art,
 Of bud, leaf, blade, and flower, was fashioning
 Abodes were self-disturbance hath no part.

THE STUDY OF NATURE.

NATURE never did betray
 The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege,
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead
 From joy to joy ; for she can so inform
 The mind that is within us, so impress
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed

With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
 The dreary intercourse of daily life,
 Shall e'er prevail against us or disturb
 Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;
 And let the misty-mountain winds be free
 To blow against thee : and, in after years,
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
 Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,
 If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
 And these my exhortations.

JEHOVAH THE PROVIDER.

AUTHOR of being ! life-sustaining King !
 Lo ! Want's dependent eye from Thee implores
 The seasons, which provide nutritious stores ;
 Give to her prayers the renovating spring,
 And summer-heats all perfecting, that bring
 The fruits which autumn from a thousand stores
 Selecteth provident ! when Earth adores
 Her God, and all her vales exulting sing.
 Without Thy blessing, the submissive steer
 Bends to the ploughman's galling yoke in vain ;
 Without Thy blessing on the varied year,
 Can the swarth reaper grasp the golden grain ?
 Without Thy blessing, all is black and drear ;
 With it, the joys of Eden bloom again.



Thomas Storer

MOORE.

WERE we asked to characterise Tom Moore in a monumental line after the manner of Tom Hood's epitaph, we should write, "He sang 'The Irish Melodies.'" And these really indicate far more truly the poetical excellence and idiosyncrasy of Moore than "The Song of the Shirt" reveals the many-sided genius of Hood. In "The Irish Melodies," we find displayed all the elements that have made Moore's poetry admired—graceful fancy, pretty sentiment, musical cadence, and happily-turned phrase; in "The Song of the Shirt," we have only the pathetic side of Hood's nature, none of that play of wit and humour and punning comicality which were as much parts of the man as his other mood of tears.

Thomas Moore was a native of the Irish metropolis, being born in Aungier Street, on the 28th May 1779. His father was a respectable grocer and spirit-dealer in Dublin, and both his parents were Roman Catholics; a religious body at that time subjected to many civic disabilities, the general public opinion sanctioning the legal enactments against them. Young Moore was educated in the faith of his fathers, and the harsh treatment of its adherents at the latter end of the last century no doubt accounts to a large extent for his early revolutionary fervour, and for his later sort of kid-glove sympathy with rebellion. The talent of rhyming early exhibited itself in Moore. How soon the poet began to manufacture verses he himself cannot remember; but at the age of fourteen he had contributed to a Dublin magazine called the

Anthologia Hibernica. Indeed of him, as of Pope, it might be said—

“As yet a child, and all unknown to fame,
He lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.”

This taste for verse was no doubt stimulated by the training he received at the school of Mr Samuel Whyte, (who, before Moore's day, had birched the dramatist Richard Brinsley Sheridan, as the most incorrigible of dunces,) who had a great taste for the drama, and encouraged a similar taste in his pupils by private theatricals. Tom Moore soon became one of his “show scholars” in this line, and frequently played at Lady Borrowe's private theatre in Dublin. In 1790, while as yet he was only eleven years of age, “An Epilogue, *A Squeeze at St Paul's*, by Master Moore,” formed a portion of the evening's entertainment at her ladyship's. The boyish sympathies of Moore were enlisted in favour of the French Revolution by his parents, who, labouring under pains and penalties as Roman Catholics, had a better reason for their republican proclivities than our own English poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, who lived long enough to be ashamed of ever having regarded that frightful Saturnalia of cruelty and murder as the herald of freedom to oppressed peoples all over the world. Moore was taken by his father to the banquet got up by rash and disloyal Irishmen in honour of the barricaders of Paris; and at one of these, in 1792, he sat on the chairman's knee while enthusiastic cheers greeted the toast, “May the breezes from France fan our Irish oak into verdure!” Young Moore, thus initiated into rebellion, became intimate with its most active promoters—the misguided but honest Emmetts, Arthur O'Connor, and others. He was a member of their debating clubs, and a contributor to the newspaper called the *Press*, which was the recognised organ of the United Irishmen. One of his letters in that paper, of a very fiery character, was taken notice of in Parliament; and there is strong reason to believe that if Moore had not been warned by his mother, who was a person

of excellent sense and judgment, to break the connexion existing between him and the "patriots," he would have shared their fate. , As it was, he did not escape suspicion of being concerned in their serious conspiracies ; but, on examination before the Vice-Chancellor, it was found that he was not really implicated in any plot.

In 1793 an Act of Parliament opened up Dublin University, hitherto an exclusively Protestant institution, to Roman Catholic students, who, however, were not permitted to share in the honours and emoluments of the University. Moore was entered at Trinity College in 1794, and there pursued his studies with diligence and success. And while engaged with his classics at the University, at home he was learning Italian from a priest, French from one of the many emigrants who sought refuge on our shores during that unhappy time for their own country, and pianoforte music from his sister's teacher. About 1796, he wrote a masque with songs, which was performed in his father's small drawing-room, in presence of a few friends, and some of the songs were received with much applause. He was also at this period a leading member of a kind of poetical court, that on certain seasons held high festive days on a little island in the Bay of Dublin.

In 1799 Moore, having taken his degree of B.A., and carrying with him a translation of Anacreon's Odes, for which he had hoped to gain a prize at his college, but was disappointed, started for London to enter himself as a student of the Middle Temple. He was not flush of cash, and the few guineas he had with him were sewed up in the waistband of his breeches by his careful mother, along with a bit of cloth blessed by the priest, as an additional safeguard against theft, we presume. More lucky than many of his brother poets who have sought that mighty city with nothing but their brains for a fortune, Moore, though so scantily supplied with capital, never ran any risk of being in want. He had a kind friend in Lord Moira, who obtained for him permission to dedicate his Odes to the Prince of Wales, and a profitable

subscription was raised, chiefly among the nobility, for their publication. In after years, Moore was unsparing in his satire of *The Fat Adonis of Fifty*. When the charge of ingratitude was hurled against him for thus assailing one who had benefited him in earlier days, the poet replied—"These favours and benefits are very easily summed up: I was allowed to dedicate *Anacreon* to his Royal Highness; I twice dined at Carlton House; and I made one of the fifteen hundred envied guests at the Prince's grand *fête* in 1815!"

Moore's success with *Anacreon* was fatal to his law studies. "Coke upon Lyttleton" and "Blackstone's Commentaries" were thrown aside that he might have more time for the wooing of the Muses. In 1801, about a year after the Odes had been published, appeared a volume of original verse by Moore, purporting to be *The Poetical Works of the late Thomas Little*, a cognomen the poet adopted in allusion to his stature, which was unusually diminutive, Sir Walter Scott describing him as the smallest of men not to be deformed. These poems were of a loose and immoral nature; but the age was not particularly fastidious, and though many blamed, yet Moore found friends ready to overlook their want of decency in consideration of their poetical ability. He himself, however, in his later days, remembered these productions with feelings of shame. In 1803 he obtained an appointment under Government, as Registrar to the Court of Admiralty at Bermuda, and arrived at his post in the beginning of the following year. A couple of months were sufficient to show that the place was not suitable for him, and he left, having appointed a deputy to do his work. Moore then travelled over a part of America, and, notwithstanding his early republican sympathies, he was far from satisfied with the state of society in that country, and recorded his sentiments in a series of poetical satires, which were then, and since have been, much condemned as ungenerous and ill-natured, and as showing a great want of acuteness in observation. It is said, indeed, in a work which within the last week or two has been issued

from the press—*The Life and Letters of Washington Irving*—that Moore expressed himself to Irving “in the fullest and strongest manner on the subject of his writings on America, which he pronounced the greatest sin of his early life.” (It is curious, if he said so, that he did not expunge the offensive pieces from the later editions of his works.) But looking at these poems in the light of recent events—in the light of that deplorable and horrible war which lately raged with so much ferocity between men and states that were, not long ago, members of the same great Republican Confederacy—we feel bound to say that, instead of a slanderer, Moore has proved himself to be a prophet.

What could be more prescient then, more true of America now, than these lines?—

“While yet upon Columbia’s rising brow
The showy smile of young Presumption plays,
Her bloom is poison’d, and her heart decays!
Even now, in dawn of life, her sickly breath
Burns with the talut of empires near their death;
And, like the nymphs of her own withering clime,
She’s old in youth—she’s blasted in her prime!”

In 1806 Moore published *Odes and Epistles*, which were treated with unmeasured severity by Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*. Moore took mortal offence—nothing but blood could wash out the crime of the editor of the “blue and buff.” Moore challenged, and Jeffrey felt bound to give him satisfaction. Chalk Farm, near Hampstead, was the place appointed for the duel, which ended in a most ludicrous fashion, no bullets having been present in the pistols. Both combatants, though ignorant of the innocuousness of their weapons, were delighted with the result, and remained sworn friends for ever after. Byron, in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, does not fail to take advantage of the incident in the paragraph commencing—

“Health to great Jeffrey! Heaven preserve his life
To flourish on the fertile shores of Fife,
And guard it sacred in his future wars,
Since authors sometimes seek the field of Mars!”

"Can none remember that eventful day,
That ever-glorious, almost fatal fray,
When Little's leadless pistol met his eye
And Bow Street myrmidons stood laughing by?"

This sneering reference to his bloodless duel, made chiefly with a view to annoy Jeffrey, enraged the fiery Moore, who now sought to transfer the vengeance Fate, in the shape of kind friends, had prevented him from wreaking on the editor of the *Edinburgh*, to Byron. Fortunately for both, the letter demanding apology or satisfaction did not reach the vagrant "Childe" until months after date, when passion had been supplanted by reason, and explanations and a dinner were accepted by both as excellent substitutes for pistols and coffee. The intimacy thus commenced ripened into a firm friendship, on the part of Moore at least, who entertained the warmest affection for Byron, the latter reciprocating as far as he was capable. Indeed, his lordship states that he never felt the emotion of friendship towards any except Lord Clare, "and, perhaps, little Moore," though he does not appear to have been quite able to divest himself of the notion that some of Moore's regard depended upon his rank and title. At all events, he more than once repeats that "little Tommy dearly loves a lord," a weakness which Moore neither could nor cared to overcome. There is, perhaps, no other case on record of two life-long intimacies originating in challenges to fight a duel. Moore was now a constant guest at the tables of the aristocracy, where his genial manner, social accomplishments, and genteel satire, made him much admired, especially at Lansdowne and Holland Houses, and at his early friend's, Lord Moira of Donnington Park, with whom, indeed, he principally resided.

Before Moore had left Ireland at all, he had cherished the notion of writing words for the beautiful music of his native land, and already had made verses suitable to various airs, which he sung with effect in the houses where he was entertained. About 1807 he entered into an arrangement with Mr Power, a musical publisher, to furnish the words for a

collection of these national melodies, Sir J. Stevenson supplying the accompaniments. Moore himself provided many of the airs, and all the changes in the melody were the poet's own invention. These "Melodies" are undoubtedly the keystone of the author's fame. None of his longer poems exhibit so much of excellence with so little of that which can be cavilled at by critics. They are remarkable for their felicitous expression, their sweet musical flow, and tender feeling, while flashes of genial wit and humour add to their attractiveness and force. But they are not national songs as the songs of Burns are national. When Burns strikes the lyre, the feelings of the national heart gush forth as the water from the rock smitten by the rod of Moses. "The Harp that once through Tara's Halls" is altogether too cosmopolitan in its symphonies to awaken such passionate outbursts as "Scots wha hae." The wit and humour too of Moore's "Melodies" are the wit and humour of a polished citizen of the world. There is not that *naïveté* in the one and rollicking *abandon* in the other which characterise the genuine Irish articles. Still, with the exception of the songs of Burns and Béranger, there are no songs that exhibit the true lyrical faculty more than those of Moore, or which are more deservedly popular; and none translate more pleasantly feelings of love, patriotism, festivity, and war. What Moore accomplished in these "Melodies" is well summed up in the song, "Dear Harp of my Country!"

"Dear Harp of my country! in darkness I found thee,
The cold chains of silence had hung o'er thee long,
When proudly, my own Island Harp! I unbound thee,
And gave all thy chords to light, freedom, and song!
The warm lay of love and the light note of gladness
Have waken'd thy fondest, thy liveliest thrill;
But so oft hast thou echo'd the deep sigh of sadness,
That even in thy mirth it will steal from thee still!

"Dear Harp of my country! farewell to thy numbers,
This sweet wreath of song is the last we shall twine!
Go, sleep, with the sunshine of Fame on thy slumbers,
Till touch'd by some hand less unworthy than mine!

If the pulse of the patriot, soldier, or lover,
Has throb'd at our lay, 'tis thy glory alone;
I was but as the wind passing heedlessly over,
And all the wild sweetness I waked was thy own!"

The publication of the *Melodies* was not completed until 1834; *National Airs*, *Sacred Songs*, *Legendary Ballads*, &c., being also added to them during that time.

In 1808 and 1809, he published anonymously three poems, *Intolerance*, *Corruption*, and *The Sceptic*;—but they were consigned almost at once to the oblivion which was really their desert.

In 1811 Moore married a Miss Bessy Dykes, a young Irish actress, who proved a sensible, loving, and most devoted wife, to whom he remained fondly attached throughout life; and never did the domestic hearth of a literary man exhibit a more perfect picture of household comfort. Up to his marriage Moore had been more or less dependent on the kindness of Lord Moira, with whom he mostly resided, but having taken a wife, he had of course to take a house of his own also; and literature as a profession being now a necessity of his position, he determined to settle down in the country for quiet. Kegworth in Leicestershire was the place chosen; but in the course of the same year he removed to Mayfield Cottage, near Ashbourne, in Derbyshire, in the vicinity of the country seat of Lord Moira, whose library was placed at his disposal. During this year Moore produced an operatic piece called the "M.P.; or, The Blue-Stocking;" but a few nights on the stage were sufficient to exhaust its interest, and it has not been revived.

In 1812, Moore determined to write an Eastern romance. He had had no personal experience in the East, he had not even made up his mind as to the subject about which he was to weave melodious verse; yet the Messrs Longmans, on the representation of Mr Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*, then in its "glorious prime," running well-nigh neck and neck with the *Times*, agreed to pay him three thousand guineas

for such a work, to take it for better for worse, at whatever time suited the author's convenience, and without any power to suggest changes or alterations. It was certainly a strange unbusiness-like bargain on the part of the publishers, but it nevertheless turned out a very profitable one. The negotiation was concluded in 1814; Moore immediately set about producing his book, and read up all the works he could lay his hands on treating of the manners and customs, arts and sciences, geography, natural history, and climate of the East, with a view to accuracy in the accessories of the story. And so carefully did he "coach" himself in this kind of knowledge, that a distinguished traveller observed, if the author of *Lalla Rookh* had never seen the lands he described, a person might learn as much of those countries from books as by riding on the back of a camel. In three years the poet had produced *Lalla Rookh*, which proved an immense success, seven editions being called for in the first year. The poem was well calculated to take the reading public of that time by storm. Panoramic verse was then of much higher account than that revealing "the light that never was on sea or land." It was before the reign of the unhappy Spasmodists; Wordsworth even was as yet but little appreciated; men loved the objective and sentimental greatly more than the reflective and imaginative—the body more than the soul of poetry; and *Lalla Rookh* suited the condition of feeling. The verse is flowing and easy, harmonious in all its variations; its similes are rich and profuse, its imagery dazzling and gorgeous; passages of the tenderest pathos, and graphic pictures of heroic action, are common, and pervading all there is that languorous, sensuous beauty which belongs only to the East. But with all its merits, a careful reader can scarcely help feeling that the real spirit of the East is well-nigh crushed out by the ornate external decoration.

While contemplating his Eastern romance in verse, Moore was not idle, but in 1813 dashed off a political satire against the Prince Regent and his Ministers, called *The Twopenny*

Post-Bag; or, Intercepted Letters, which so hit the public taste, that thirteen or fourteen editions went through the press in a twelvemonth. Many other light satirical effusions found their way to the public through the columns of the *Times* or the *Morning Chronicle*, and these newspaper squibs are said to have yielded their author as much as £400 or £500 a-year. Moore about this time was also writing articles for the *Edinburgh Review*. In 1818 he accompanied the poet Rogers to the French capital, and there he obtained materials for *The Fudge Family in Paris*, a satire from which he realised £350 in a fortnight, the work having in that time gone through five editions. His joy in successful authorship, however, had been marred by the death of one of his children in 1817; and in 1818 his deputy made off with the proceeds of a ship and cargo deposited in his hands, leaving Moore responsible for £6000. Many offered him pecuniary assistance, but he declined its acceptance, preferring, like Sir Walter Scott at a later period, to pay off the debt by the labours of his pen. Meanwhile, to escape an attachment issued against his person by the Admiralty Court, he went to Paris in September 1819, and shortly afterwards accompanied Lord John Russell to Italy. *Rhymes on the Road*, embodying the poet's impressions of the scenery he passed through, &c., were the result of this journey. In Paris the gaiety of the place prevented Moore working so hard as he had anticipated to clear off the debt; but the claims were ultimately reduced to a thousand guineas, of which the defaulter's uncle paid £300, and Lord Lansdowne gave a cheque for the rest, which Moore afterwards repaid from the amount he received for *The Loves of the Angels*, published in 1823. On the settlement of this unpleasant affair in which his deputy had involved him, Moore returned to England, and took up his residence in Sloperton Cottage, near Devizes, within easy distance of the seat of his patron, Lord Lansdowne. The *Fables of the Holy Alliance* were published in 1823; in the following year the *Memoirs of Captain Rock*

appeared; and in 1825 the biography of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, which is a work on the whole of considerable merit, but more overlaid with ornament and embellished with poetry than a historical memoir ought to be. In this year Moore visited Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford; and along with him and Lockhart went to the Edinburgh theatre, where it is related, a man in the pit, recognising them, cried out, "Eh! eh! yon's Sir Walter wi' Lockhart and his wife; and wha's the wee body wi' the pawky een? wow, but it's Tam Moore, just." Moore acknowledged the recognition by rising and bowing to the audience. In 1827 *The Epicurean*, a prose Eastern tale, was published, containing many passages of striking description, and displaying great learning in Eastern matters. This also was a very profitable venture. In 1830 Moore published *The Letters and Journals of Lord Byron, with Notices of his Life*, which is by far the most valuable of his prose works. It is one of the most interesting biographies in the language, and it is written with singular tact, judgment, and ability. For this work, in two volumes, Moore received the sum of four thousand guineas from Murray, who also supplied a considerable portion of the material. About the year 1820, Byron intrusted to Moore an autobiography, embracing all the principal events of his life up to that date, Moore being authorised to publish it after the noble lord's death. Moore, pressed for cash, sold it to Murray for two thousand guineas; when Byron died, his friends, afraid of disclosures that might be made in the memoirs, urged Moore to redeem and destroy it. In an evil moment he consented, and arranged with Murray to refund with interest the money he had received, and committed the work to the flames. This undoubted injustice to the memory of his departed friend, Moore did his best to atone for by afterwards writing Byron's biography, as noted above.

In 1831 he published *A Summer Fete*, a poetical piece, and in the same year the *Memoir of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*; in 1833 *Travels of an Irishman in Search of a Religion*, and,

two years afterwards, a *History of Ireland*. In 1841 he commenced a collection of his poetical works, which extended to ten volumes. That disease which had darkened the last days of Swift, of Southey, and of Scott, was now hovering over him, and three years before his death, which took place at Sloperton Cottage in February 1852, had settled down upon his brain, leaving him from that time until his decease in a state of hopeless mental infirmity, through which his wife tended him with the most anxious and considerate care. His three children had gone before him, one not without having caused him much painful anxiety and sorrow; and for the benefit of his widow he left his *Memoirs, Journals, and Correspondence*, which, edited by Lord John Russell in a very slovenly way, produced £3000. In 1835 Moore had received a Government pension of £300; a further pension of £100 was allowed to his wife two years before his death.

Our opinion of Moore's poetical talent has been already indicated. In all the domestic relations his character stood deservedly high. He was an affectionate son, a good husband, a loving father, and a warm friend. His social accomplishments were of the rarest order, but his vanity was as exacting. Though loving a lord, he preserved his independence and personal respect; and though lacking the martyr zeal of the great patriots who have struck off the fetters wherewith their countrymen were bound, he never sacrificed for place or emolument his political opinions.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF MOORE.

AN EASTERN SCENE.

Now upon Syria's land of roses
Softly the light of eve reposes,
And, like a glory, the broad sun
Hangs over sainted Lebanon :
Whose head in win'try grandure towers
And whitens with eternal sleet,
While summer, in a vale of flowers,
Is sleeping rosy at his feet.
To one who look'd from upper air,
O'er all th' enchanted regions there,
How beauteous must have been the gl'v,
The life, the sparkling from below !
Fair gardens, shining streams, with ranks
Of golden melons on their banks.
More golden where the sunlight falls,—
Gay lizards, glittering on the walls
Of ruin'd shrines, busy and bright,
As they were all alive with light ;—
And yet more splendid, numerous flocks
Of pigeons, settling on the rocks,
With their rich, restless wings, that gleam
Variously in the crimson beam
Of the warm west, as if inlaid
With brilliants from the mine, or made
Of tearless rainbows, such as span
Th' unclouded skies of Peristan !
And then, the mingling sounds that come
Of shepherd's ancient reed, with hum
Of the wild bees of Palestine,
Banqueting through the flowery vales—
And Jordan, those sweet banks of thine,
And woods, so full of nightingales.

THE APPROACHING STORM.

THE day is louring—stilly black
Sleeps the grim wave, while heaven's rack,
Dispersed and wild, 'twixt earth and sky
Hangs like a shatter'd canopy !

There's not a cloud in that blue plain
 But tells of storm to come or past ;—
 Here flying loosely as the mane
 Of a young war-horse in the blast ;—
 There, roll'd in masses dark and swelling
 As proud to be the thunder's dwelling !
 While some, already burst and riven,
 Seem melting down the verge of heaven ;
 As though the infant storm had rent
 The mighty womb that gave him birth,
 And having swept the firmament,
 Was now in fierce career for earth.
 On earth 'twas yet all calm around,
 A pulseless silence, dread, profound,
 More awful than the tempest's sound.
 The diver steer'd for Ormus' bowers,
 And moor'd his skiff till calmer hours ;
 The sea-birds, with portentous screech,
 Flew fast to land ;—upon the beach
 The pilot oft had paused with glance
 Turn'd upward to that wild expanse ;—
 And all was boding, drear, and dark
 As her own soul when Hinda's bark
 Went slowly from the Persian shore.—
 No music timed her parting oar,
 Nor friends upon the lessening strand,
 Linger'd, to wave the unseen hand,
 Or speak the farewell, heard no more ;—
 But lone, unheeded, from the bay
 The vessel takes its mournful way,
 Like some ill-destined bark that steers
 In silence through the Gate of Tears.

THE LIFEBOAT.

'Tis sweet to behold, when the billows are sleeping,
 Some gay-colour'd bark moving gracefully by ;
 No damp on her deck but the even-tide's weeping,
 No breath in her sails but the summer-wind's sigh.

Yet who would not turn with a fonder emotion,
 To gaze on the life-boat, though rugged and worn,
 Which often hath wafted o'er hills of the ocean,
 The lost light of hope to the seaman forlorn !

Oh ! grant that of those who in life's sunny slumber
 Around us like summer-barks idly have play'd,
 When storms are abroad we may find in the number
 One friend, like the life-boat, to fly to our aid.



Yet who would not turn with a fonder emotion,
To gaze on the life-boat, though rugged and worn,
Which often hath waited o'er hills of the ocean
The lost light o. hope to the seaman forlorn.

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INSTABILITY OF AFFECTION.

ALAS! how light a cause may move
 Dissension between hearts that love!
 Hearts that the world in vain had tried,
 And sorrow but more closely tied;
 That stood the storm when waves were rough,
 Yet in a sunny hour fall off,
 Like ships that have gone down at sea,
 When heaven was all tranquillity!
 A something light as air—a look,
 A word unkind or wrongly taken—
 Oh! love, that tempest never shook,
 A breath, a touch like this hath shaken.
 And ruder words will soon rush in
 To spread the breach that words begin;
 And eyes forget the gentle ray
 They wore in courtship's smiling day;
 And voices lose the tone that shed
 A tenderness round all they said;
 Till fast declining, one by one,
 The sweetnesses of love are gone,
 And hearts so lately mingled, seem
 Like broken clouds—or like the stream,
 That smiling left the mountain's brow,
 As though its waters ne'er could sever,
 Yet, e'er it reach the plain below,
 Breaks into floods that part for ever.

INNISFALLEN.

SWEET Innisfallen, fare thee well,
 May calm and sunshine long be thine?
 How fair thou art, let others tell,
 While but to feel how fair is mine.

Sweet Innisfallen, fare thee well,
 And long may light around thee smile,
 As soft as on that evening fell,
 When first I saw that fairy isle.

Thou wert too lovely, then, for one
 Who had to turn to paths of care,
 Who had through vulgar crowds to run,
 And leave thee bright and silent there.

No more along thy shores to roam,
 But on the world's dim ocean tost,
 Dream of thee sometimes, as a home
 Of sunshine, he had seen and lost.

Far better in thy weeping hours,
 To part from thee as I do now,
 When mist is o'er thy blooming bowers.
 Like sorrow's veil on beauty's brow.

For though unrivall'd still thy grace,
 Thou dost not look, as then, too blest,
 But in thy shadows seem'st a place
 Where weary man might hope to rest—

Might hope to rest, and find in thee
 A gloom like Eden's on the day
 He left its shade, when every tree,
 Like thine, hung weeping o'er his way.

Weeping or smiling, lovely isle!
 And still the lovelier for thy tears—
 For though but rare thy sunny smile,
 'Tis heaven's own glance when it appears.

Like feeling hearts whose joys are few,
 But when indeed they come, divine—
 The steadiest light the sun e'er threw
 Is lifeless to one glance of thine.

THE CALM AFTER A STORM.

How calm, how beautiful come on
 The stilly hours when storms are gone,
 When warring winds have died away,
 And clouds, beneath the dancing ray,
 Melt off, and leave the land and sea
 Sleeping in bright tranquillity—
 Fresh as if day again were born,
 Again upon the lap of morn!
 When the light blossoms, rudely torn
 And scatter'd at the whirlwind's will,
 Hang floating in the pure air still,
 Filling it all with precious balm,
 In gratitude for this sweet calm:—
 And every drop the thunder-showers
 Have left upon the grass and flowers
 Sparkles, as 'twere that lightning gem
 Whose liquid flame is born of them!
 When 'stead of one unchanging breeze,
 There blow a thousand gentle airs,
 And each a different perfume bears,—
 As if the loveliest plants and trees
 Had vassal breezes of their own,
 To watch and wait on them alone,
 And waft no other breath than theirs!



Walter J. M.

SCOTT.

It has been sometimes said that there is nothing of which a man is more vain than of authorship, yet Sir Walter Scott was certainly more proud of his pedigree than of his writings ; and, what is scarcely less strange, that which he valued the less was the means of making him, while that which he valued the more was the source of his greatest misfortunes. The Border, that great nursery of families, gave birth to the Dukes of Buccleuch, with whom the poet was connected. It is fortunate that those who are proud of lineage are exempted from questioning, or even looking at the origin of their families ; for it is more true than pleasant to their descendants, that the beginnings of these Border septs were often men whose superiority was founded on nothing better than the stealing of cattle. Yet such is the power of genius in transferring qualities, that even so mean and disreputable a calling has received at the hand of this, one of her sons, something so like an appearance of dignity and heroism, that the author could congratulate himself on both ends of his pedigree.

Sir Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, on the 15th of August 1771, a day signalised by the birth of Napoleon. His father, a man of unblemished reputation for correct business habits, honesty, and benevolence, was a writer to the signet ; his mother, Ann Rutherford, was daughter of Dr John Rutherford, first professor of physic in the University of Edinburgh, who had studied under the celebrated Boer-

haave. Mr Robert Scott, farmer at Sandyknowe, in the vicinity of Smailholm Tower, upon the Borders, was the paternal grandfather, being the son of Mr Walter Scott, a younger son of Walter Scott of Raeburn, third son of Sir Walter Scott of Harden. The Scotts of Harden, again, came, in the fourteenth century, from the stock of the Buccleuchs, whereby arose the connexion between the poet and the greatest of the Border clans.

Scott was a healthy infant from the beginning, and the lameness with which he was affected through life was not congenital, neither did it come of what may be called accident, if the origin of it may not be called strange, as described by himself. One night he had a great aversion to go to bed, and it was not till he was chased round the room and laid hold of, that he could be prevailed upon to comply with the wishes of his mother. In the morning he was affected with fever, and after three days it was discovered that he had lost the use of his right leg. After this, and till he was about eight years of age, his childhood was chiefly spent at his grandfather's house of Sandyknowe, where, even at this early time, he began to be lovingly familiar with the scenery of the Border, and even some of the simplest of the traditions and ballads, which he heard narrated or sung in the farmhouse. At this early stage, or a little beyond it, he began to show that love for miscellaneous reading, but chiefly that which was connected with history and adventure, which he entertained so passionately almost through his whole life, and which he turned to the account of his genius. This gave rise, as it generally does, to hopes of scholarship; but on being placed in the High School of Edinburgh, in 1779, he failed to signalise himself in the studies of his class, if, indeed, he was not numbered amongst the dullards. The circumstance is worth an observation, not unuseful, as it may tend to disabuse us of a notion which is all but ineradicable, that scholarship forms any index of success in studies and avocations which belong altogether to faculties not compre-

hended among those necessary for classic superiority. All the intellectual powers which follow in the train of the emotional may be almost in abeyance, while the memory, exercised upon languages, may raise a youth to academic honours, so often vainly looked to as a presage of future greatness. Nor are we to forget that precocity, always in the physical kingdom, and not seldom in the moral, bespeaks short duration.

Even then, however, Scott, in place of showing the general dulness ascribed to him in the *Percy Anecdotes*, evinced eminence in historical, anecdotal, and miscellaneous knowledge, treasuring up avariciously names and facts which were destined to impart substance and charms to his subsequent writings. The poet and chronicler were, in short, in the germ; already his story-telling was shrewd and captivating; and, in his twelfth year, his love of ballad-poetry was ineradicably established by the delight with which he devoured *Percy's Reliques*.

About this time, his health, which ever since the fever had been weakly, began again to give way, and he was sent, for the benefit of a change of air, to reside at Kelso with his aunt. How strangely are the threads of a great man's early life woven! If he had not gone there he might never have been acquainted, at least connected in a literary way, with James and John Ballantyne, afterwards the eminent printers and publishers. It was in Kelso that he met and formed an intimacy with these young men. Little did any of them know how their names would go over the world, and how that long and mysterious connexion would terminate. At this time James Ballantyne had noticed the bent of Scott's mind. "In the intervals of school hours, it was our constant practice to walk by the banks of the Tweed, and his stories became quite inexhaustible." Even on that same spot where they walked, Scott was to raise Abbotsford—his pride and his ruin.

In the winter of 1783, he entered the University of his

native city. He enrolled himself for the Humanity Class, under Professor Hill, and the Greek Class, under Professor Dalzell, and for the latter again in 1784 ; but the only class for which he seems to have matriculated at the College was that of Logic, under Professor Bruce, in 1785. With such predilections as he now possessed, it was vain to expect that application to the classics which is so indispensable to success. Accordingly, he made so little real progress as to justify the estimate subsequently made of his classical knowledge, that he never understood Greek beyond the elements, and possessed but a loose scholarship in Latin ; and even the acquaintance which, in early manhood, he made with French, Italian, Spanish, and German, was at the very best superficial.

In May 1786, when nearly fifteen years of age, he was articled to his father as an apprentice, in order to be initiated into the secrets of the law and the complicated mysteries of conveyancing. But although he attended his father's chambers pretty regularly for four years, his heart was never in the business, from which he would escape at every opportunity. In place of "progresses," or bundles of parchment called title-deeds, you would have seen on his desk all manner of works in the *département* of fiction, and a book on knight-errantry might have been seen lying on the top of a last will and testament. In the second year of his apprenticeship he burst a blood-vessel, and was thereby confined to bed ; but after this he began to assume that robust health and hardihood which he retained almost through life. There was a strong physical spring in his constitution, which, working in harmony with a natural joyousness, fitted him for all manner of out-door exercises, either on foot or horseback ; then, scenery of all kinds, particularly the wildest, had inexpressible charms for him, not simply as mere scenes of nature, but as the theatres of traditional adventure, whether military or domestic. Every old castle, or ruined house, or muirland fell, that came under his eye, immediately became tenanted by beings called up by the magic of his crea

tive power ; and then he would pour out upon his hearers such stories of intrigue, *diablerie*, or war, that he was as captivating in oral displays as he subsequently became in written description. All the while, however, Scott showed no aptitude for the production of poetry in the proper sense, for it may be doubted whether a rhymed chronicle deserves that name, and it is quite certain that, beyond an enthusiastic perception of the ballad jingle, he had no ear for music.

His father's intention, as well as his own, was that he should go to the bar, and his attendance at the Speculative Society was intended as a step in his training. He had here an opportunity, also, of writing the essays which formed a part of the society's forms of business, and in which he could exhibit his turn for antiquarian studies. In 1792, he was admitted a member of the Faculty of Advocates ; and as an evidence that he was fairly set up for doing serious business as a pleader, he was supplied by his father with a well-furnished house in a genteel part of the town. Every requisite was prepared but the legal and forensic faculties ; not that he was destitute of these, for his versatile mind was deficient scarcely in any human power, but that his tastes and inclinations prevented him from giving these studies that undivided attention necessary to absolute mastership, and therefore success. He was not zealous to join "the ranks of the gentlemen not over anxious for business," for he had strong ambition to figure even as a barrister ; and it has been said, that, even with his sagacity and ready powers of speech—though not forensic speech—if he had been early tempted by fees, and stimulated by duty, so as to have been brought within the challenge of competition, the energy of his nature and his deep sagacity would inevitably have carried him on to triumph. Nor does this seem doubtful, for Scott was not a shy contemplative poet ; he was essentially a shrewd man of the world, and in place of his antiquarian predilections operating against him, they might have contributed to his success. It is certain, however, that he was never put into

the track, so it could not be said that he failed so much as that he really did not seriously try.

Without any call from without, then, to take his mind off his old studies, he fell back into the meshes he had woven for himself; but his earliest efforts at authorship were comparatively small and desultory. It seems certain that Scott was tardy in arriving at a conviction of his powers, and it is doubtful if he knew where they lay. His efforts were more tentative than confident. In 1796, he published translations of some of those ballads of Bürger, which have such a charm for young Scotchmen,—particularly *The Wild Huntsman*,—clearly showing his preference for the supernatural, at the same time that he was a shrewd observer of the world. In the same department, he contributed to Lewis's *Tales of Wonder*. In 1798 appeared his translation of Goethe's drama, *Goetz von Berlichingen*; and in 1799 he wrote and made known to his friends the earliest of his greater efforts in original poetry, the ballads of *Glenfinlas*, *The Eve of St John*, and *The Gray Brother*. Yet withal, though the pieces were well received, he made no great progress to a high literary reputation. Perhaps he figured better as Adjutant of the Royal Mid-Lothian Regiment of Cavalry, a section of the Volunteer Militia of the time, for which office his lameness was considered no bar, and his love of poetry no recommendation.

While on a visit to the English Lakes, Scott became acquainted with Miss Mary Carpenter, daughter of John Carpenter of Lyons, and then an orphan, her father having fallen a victim in the hottest period of the French Revolution. He married her in 1797, with consent of her guardians, and an annuity of £200 a year. His father's death next gave him a moderate patrimony; and in 1799 he obtained, through the Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Melville, whose politics he had espoused, the Sheriffship of Selkirkshire, an office involving neither responsibility nor labour, with a salary of £300 a year. Throughout his whole life he was a

very good example of the possibility of making poetry and worldly success perfectly compatible.

During all this time, his information was increasing, and his powers were ripening ; but he did not seem to have had any intuitive conception of the form in which they ought to be applied. The best that could be said for him was, that his inherent good sense and independence—perhaps not less an inward consciousness of originality—prevented him from following old tracks, and falling into the youthful trap of imitation. With a wonderful memory, especially for all odds and ends of history, scraps of tradition, and old ballads, he had been gradually and almost unconsciously collecting a store, and he thus became fitted for the task of giving to the public the poetical legends of the Borders. In 1802, he published the first and second volumes of *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, a publication which brought him at once a distinguished reputation, not only as a curious collector and annotator, but as an original ballad-writer, several of his own effusions having formed a part of the *Minstrelsy*.

This work, which was the product of a long gathering, prosecuted with an object like that to which it was applied, was followed by another, which, as respects success, was a miracle. In 1802, he had begun to write what, in a letter to Ellis, he denominated “a kind of romance of Border chivalry, in a light-horseman sort of stanza.” It seems to have been at first intended to be a long ballad, with no higher destination than an insertion in the *Minstrelsy* ; but having submitted the MS. to some of his friends,—Jeffrey, Wordsworth, and others,—he was induced, upon their recommendation, to extend it into the form of an independent metrical romance. Such was the history of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which became the foundation-stone of Scott’s fame as an original poet. The sale of the book was, as we have said, marvellous ; and the spread was commensurate, not only with the admiration and delight of the reading public, but also with the favour it received from the hands of the

critics, at that time a surly set, envious of rising reputations. That the work really deserved all the praise it got, there can be no doubt; for although, viewed strictly in the aspect of its originality, it is only in the wake of the old metrical romances, it contained so many warm pictures of scenery, burned with such a glow of bardic enthusiasm, and resuscitated so effectually the slumbering poetical mind of the nation, that it had all the charms of novelty. The effect was thus increased by the wakening feeling of surprise, for the work appeared at a time when—Burns being only an immortal memory, and the earlier volumes of Crabbe and Campbell simply domestic or didactic—poetry which addressed itself to the past of a nation's chivalry was unheard of. Above all, as regarded admiration, the poem is a work of high art; for though there may be less construction in it than in some of the subsequent poems, with, perhaps, fewer grand passages and less striking imagery, it is pervaded by a simplicity which is a species of art itself. Lastly, it was more true to his aim of reviving the spirit of the old knights and lovers in a form suited to modern sympathies.

It may be worth while to give the author's own history of this, the first of his great poems. "The lovely Countess of Dalkeith, afterwards Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, had come to the land of her husband with the desire of making herself acquainted with its traditions and customs. She soon heard enough of Border lore. Among others, an aged gentleman of property, near Langholm, (Mr Stoddart,) communicated to her ladyship the story of Gilpin Horner, a story in which the narrator and many more in that county were firm believers. The young lady, much delighted with the legend, and the gravity and full confidence in which it was told, enjoined it on me as a task to compose a ballad on the subject. Of course, to hear was to obey; and thus the goblin story, objected to by many of the critics as an excrescence upon the poem, was, in fact, the occasion of its being written. It was, to the best of my recollection, more than

a year after Mr Stoddart's visit, that, by way of experiment, I composed the first two or three stanzas of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. I was shortly afterwards visited by two intimate friends, whom I was in the habit of consulting in my attempts at composition, having equal confidence in their sound taste and friendly sincerity. . . . As neither of my friends said much to me on the subject of the stanzas I showed them before their departure, I had no doubt that their disgust was greater than their good-nature chose to express. Looking upon them, therefore, as a failure, I threw the MS. into the fire, and thought as little more as I could of the matter. Some time afterwards, I met one of my two counsellors, who inquired, with considerable appearance of interest, about the progress of the romance I had commenced, and was greatly surprised at learning its fate. He confessed that neither he nor his mutual friend had been at first able to give a precise opinion of a poem so much out of the common road, but that as they walked home together to the city, they had talked much on the subject, and the result was an earnest desire that I would proceed with the composition. The poem being once licensed by the critics as fit for the market was soon finished."

After the publication of *The Lay* in 1805, Scott's pen never ceased. In 1806 he collected his original compositions of the ballad order into a small volume, with the title, *Ballads and Lyrical Pieces*. *Marmion*, containing in its famous battle-scene one of the most striking and spirited passages in the entire range of our poetry, came, in 1808, after, as he admits, great pains. Then the Annotated Works of Dryden, in eighteen volumes, with a Life. Next, in 1809, *The State Papers and Letters of Sir Ralph Sadler*, in two volumes; and in the same year, Lord Somers' Tracts, to which he contributed notes, in twelve volumes. Amidst all which, he wrote in the *Annual Register*, a work at first edited by Mr Southey.

Not long after, appeared the poem which not undeservedly

is considered the finest of his poetical works,—*The Lady of the Lake*,—wherein he had an opportunity to luxuriate in those descriptions of Highland scenery which first roused the English to the beauties of our romantic country. In 1811, appeared *Don Roderick*, and in 1813, *Rokeby*, in which he tried, not ineffectually, yet bringing down upon him the clever English *Jokeyby*, to clothe southern scenery, and a tale of the civil wars, with the charm he had so magically thrown over the romantic features of his own country. Subsequently, in 1814, came *The Lord of the Isles*. Adding one or two anonymous poems, and taking into account his contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*, and his assistance in founding its formidable rival, the *Quarterly Review*, we have an array of works, all within the compass of a few years, which, even with the admission that he was stimulated by the commercial engagements he had formed, is nothing less than marvellous.

It became manifest, however, to himself that he had exhausted the purse of the public with his own poetical mine, and the exigency of his engagement with the Ballantynes stimulated him to new efforts. These engagements commenced so early as 1805. His schoolfellow, James Ballantyne, was the editor and printer of a newspaper in Roxburghshire, and Scott assisted him in setting up a printing establishment in Edinburgh. After lending money to the firm, he became a partner, as we have said, in 1805. A quarrel with his publisher, Constable, afforded him, he thought, the means of giving to the public a higher literature than that which best remunerates a publisher; and—which was a kind of contradiction—he thought he must derive profit from a business guided by a man of knowledge like himself; in short, he confounded the aspirations of an author with the expectations of a merchant. He accordingly got Mr John Ballantyne to be the head of a publishing establishment, as James was of a printing one, and in this he became also a partner to the extent of a third. It has

often been a matter of surprise that a man like Scott, with his family pride, his fame, and his money, could thus descend to mercantile means of adding to his fortune. Some have excused him on the plea that he was serving his friends, but others, more truly, seek the reason in a love of family aggrandisement, to which he knew money was indispensable.

Certain it is that Scott was ashamed of this mercantile speculation. All these arrangements were kept a profound secret—Scott being always held up and considered by the public as the mere patron and friend of the Ballantynes. A few years after these arrangements, Scott commenced the second great stage of his literary progress. He was himself the first to perceive the waning popularity of his poetry. Byron's *Childe Harold* had appeared two years before the publication of *Marmion*, and the freshness and vigour of that chant, combining, as it did, a species of romance with the characters, thoughts, and feelings of a more conventional and recent age, put out for a time the light of Scott's rhyming chronicles. In short, the people were wakened out of a dream of the past, unreal though gorgeous, and felt a relief in receiving the impressions of actual life, sublimed by the fire of genius, but yet a reflection of their experiences.

Scott, like a true champion, accordingly set himself to the task of regaining his laurels in a new field. The fame he had acquired was subject to the old law of discontent. He wished more glory, and he also wished more gold. The one was natural and praiseworthy, the other artificial and mean; nor was the meanness the less that he burned throughout his whole life to be the lord of broad acres and the founder of a great Border family. All his tendencies were towards the great; and though his good heart could not cast off the humanities, it is to be feared that his general *bonhomme* was simply condescension, stimulated by prudence. From this passion nothing would divert him; but he could not hope to gratify it from his own ordinary means, though his appointment as one of the clerks of the Court of Session added

nearly £1300 a year to an income already great; and hence his ardour to enter upon a new mine. In 1805, while engaged on *Marmion*, he had begun a novel, under, it is sometimes said, the stimulus of the example of Miss Edgeworth, but threw it aside, and it is said to have lain in a barrel for years. He added two volumes to it in the course of three weeks, in 1814, and published it anonymously in the autumn of that year, under the name of *Waverley*; or, *'Tis Sixty Years Since*. For twelve successive years the *Waverley Novels* were showered forth in quick succession. Eighteen novels appeared from 1815 to 1825. It is scarcely necessary at this day to speak of works which are known all over the world, and the merits of which have become a proverb, indicating almost insuperable excellence. Nor would it be easy to speak of them so as not to appear tedious, for their qualities are so varied in character, construction, sentiment, pathos, and humour, that they represent the workings of one of the most fruitful of minds in almost every aspect towards the physical world and human nature.

The year 1825 was the last year of the prosperity of this extraordinary man,—a termination to a long course of success. We have looked principally to his literary life; but his career had many other lights and shadows. In 1811, he purchased a farm on the banks of the Tweed, naming it *Abbotsford*, whereon having erected a cottage, he began to acquire land round it, till he was proprietor of a considerable estate. This property, or most of it, was bought at extravagant prices, at a time when he was under the passion of his old idea of territorial aggrandisement; and his well-known sagacity in bargain-making was reduced to little better than persuasions to induce people to accept his money for what, in some cases, was not half the value of what he offered. Next came the great baronial residence, built at a fabulous expense, and then the filling it with antiquarian and historical relics, brought together with persevering industry, and at great sacrifices. The place became a show, and at the

same time a kind of hostelry, where the greatest men in Europe were proud to be received, and partake of the princely hospitalities of the Great Unknown. In all this, there was just that amount of folly where passion degenerates into weakness, and God's blessings are transmuted into worldly idols. In 1820, he received the baronetcy for which he sighed, as an aristocratic badge to complete the foundation of the new Border family; and in the following year, he figured impassionately, if not nervously, as the director of the whimsical pageantry in celebration of George the Fourth's visit to Scotland. The money he spent in all these displays was enormous; nor could he ever have been reconciled to such outlay, except from the conviction that his genius was a mine upon which he could draw when he pleased. He forgot that nature has certain boundaries; or rather, being greater than nature, he thought he could overleap them. Even some of the people in the neighbourhood of Abbotsford shook their heads; and Mr John Mercer, an adjacent proprietor, whose property was envied, told Sir Walter that "he wouldna be surprised if he lived to see the craws bigging in the brow lum-heads."

Meanwhile Fate was busy with her ordinary adjustments of eccentric decorations. Before this period, the Messrs Ballantyne were tottering, and they were brought to the ground in 1826 by the failure of Constable's house, with which they were deeply involved. The disclosure of Sir Walter's concealed partnership followed of necessity, and his liabilities were found to amount to nearly £150,000. Now the better man emerged from the dream of grandeur and pride, displaying his old courage and real high-mindedness. He refused to be a party to a composition, or to accept of any discharge, and pledged himself to devote his whole subsequent life to hard labour for the purpose of paying off his debts. This pledge he actually redeemed; but it cost him dear, for the hard toil brought his life to a termination long before nature's time. A great part of the debt was

satisfied during his life, and the balance was paid by his executors ; but there was little left to maintain the dignity of the new family. One main source in bringing about this result was the Collected Edition of his Works, with the personal notes he furnished to it. He also brought out a new series of writings, which, though clearly indicating decay, and one or two not of a high order, will always be viewed with respect from the very circumstances which produced them. *Woodstock* was published in 1826, realising £8000, at the very height of his difficulties and anxiety. Afterwards came the *Life of Napoleon*, which, however, was partly written before the bankruptcy ; then, in succession, the *Tales of a Grandfather*, the first and second series of the *Chronicles of the Canongate*, *Anne of Geierstein*, a History of Scotland for Lardner's *Encyclopædia*, two dramas, and *Letters on Demonology*. In 1831 were first seen the indications of the failure of the active intellect, in *Count Robert of Paris* and *Castle Dangerous*.

Sir Walter had, in 1830, been struck by paralysis, which came back more than once. Having been prevailed upon to pause from labour, he departed, in September 1831, for the Continent, of which he had been allowed by his avocations to see but little. In November, he arrived at Malta, where orders were given by the Governor that every attention should be paid to the poet,—an unnecessary injunction, for every one seemed anxious to render him honour. He arrived at Naples on the 17th of December, where by the English residents he was received with marked attentions, and afterwards presented at Court. He next went to Pompeii, where he viewed with much interest the splendid mosaic representation of a combat of the Greeks and Persians ; and then, very deliberately, the various antiquities in detail. In the library, to which he next went, he was surrounded by the literati, who showed him all the curiosities of that wonderful collection. He next proceeded to Rome, where he visited St Peter's and other remarkable places, and got

offered to him the free use of museums and libraries, of which he could now make small use. Having crossed the Apennines, he arrived at Venice on the 19th ; and, having stayed there for a short time, went to Frankfort ; whence he embarked in a Rhine boat ; but, on going down the river, he had another attack of apoplectic paralysis. On reaching London, he was put to bed, and attended by Sir Henry Hallford, and other physicians, who some time after consented to his removal to Scotland. On arriving at Newhaven, he was slung ashore in his carriage, totally helpless, and with his mind so entirely gone that he had sunk to worse than second childhood ; yet on arriving at the scene of all his former glory — Abbotsford — “ his dogs having assembled round him, and began to fawn upon and lick his hands, he alternately sobbed and smiled over them, till sleep oppressed him.” For four or five days after his arrival, he was wheeled about the house and garden. On the 16th, he remained in bed ; and, though probably no better, he, on the 17th, desired to be placed at his desk. His desire was complied with ; the pen was put into his hand, and dropped from utter inability to hold it. He became, shortly after, unconscious ; and died, in the midst of his children, on the 21st of September, in the sixty-second year of his age.

Though Scott was a man far easier to be understood than Byron, it has always remained a wonder why one with his breadth of mind, moderation of manner, and eclat of genius, could ever have been precipitated into his wild ambition to be great in mere conventional distinctions of rank. The wonder is, at best, very unnecessary, if applied to an exception from general laws ; for we have only to remember that a ruling passion is irrespective not only of the prudence which lies in moderation, but even of those qualities which are the very opposite of the dominant desire. No man could inculcate the virtues of moderation and humility better than Scott, if he did not even *look them* better than any other man ; but all this was the mere overlaying of the internal

fire ; and how that came in that shape to be there, is just one of the mysteries of man's being.

By this passion hung all his imperfections. We are, and ought to be, like every Scotchman, and all true lovers of literature, slow in making deductions from such a character. And, therefore, without any further addition to this brief sketch, we shall only say in conclusion, that, take Sir Walter Scott all in all, it will be long before we shall see his like again.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SCOTT.

HYMN OF THE HEBREW MAID.

WHEN Israel, of the Lord beloved,
Out from the land of bondage came,
Her fathers' God before her moved,
An awful guide in smoke and flame.
By day, along th' astonish'd lands
The cloudy pillar glided slow ;
By night, Arabia's crimson'd sands
Return'd the fiery column's glow.
There rose the choral hymn of praise,
And trump and timbrel answer'd keen ;
And Zion's daughters pour'd their lays,
With priest's and warrior's voice between.
No portents now our foes amaze,
Forsaken Israel wanders lone ;
Our fathers would not know Thy ways,
And Thou hast left them to their own.
But present still, though now unseen !
When brightly shines the prosp'rous day,
Be thoughts of Thee a cloudy screen
To temper the deceitful ray.
And oh, when stoops on Judah's path
In shade and storm the frequent night,
Be Thou, long-suff'ring, slow to wrath,
A burning and a shining light !
Our harps we left by Babel's streams,
The tyrant's jest, the Gentile's scorn ;
No censer round our altar beams,
And mute are timbrel, harp, and horn ;
But Thou hast said,—"The blood of goat,
The flesh of rams I will not prize ;
A contrite heart, a humble thought,
Are mine accepted sacrifice."

THE LAST MINSTREL.

THE way was long, the wind was cold,
The minstrel was infirm and old ;
His wither'd cheek, and tresses gray,
Seem'd to have known a better day ;
The harp, his sole remaining joy,
Was carried by an orphan boy ;

The last of all the bards was he,
 Who sung of border chivalry ;
 For welladay ! their date was fled,
 His tuneful brethren all were dead ;
 And he, neglected and oppress'd,
 Wish'd to be with them, and at rest.
 No more on prancing palfrey borne,
 He caroll'd light as lark at morn ;
 No longer courted and caress'd,
 High placed in hall, a welcome guest,
 He pour'd, to lord and lady gay,
 The unpremeditated lay !
 Old times were changed, old manners gone ;
 A stranger fill'd the Stuarts' throne ;
 The bigots of the iron time
 Had call'd his harmless art a crime.
 A wandering Harper, scorn'd and poor,
 He begg'd his bread from door to door.
 And tuned, to please a peasant's ear,
 The harp a king had loved to hear.

LOVE OF COUNTRY.

BREATHES there a man with soul so dead,
 Who never to himself hath said,
 This is my own, my native land !
 Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd,
 As home his footsteps he hath turn'd
 From wand'ring on a foreign strand ?
 If such there breathe, go, mark him well,
 For him no minstrel raptures swell ;
 High though his titles, proud his name,
 Boundless his wealth as wish can claim ;
 Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
 The wretch concentred all in self,
 Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
 And, doubly dying, shall go down
 To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
 Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung !

FANCIED HAPPINESS.

WOE to the youth whom Fancy gains,
 Winning from Reason's hand the reins ;
 Pity and woe ! for such a mind
 Is soft, contemplative, and kind ;
 And woe to those who train such youth,
 And spare to press the rights of truth,
 The mind to strengthen and anneal,
 While on the stithy glows the steel ;
 Oh ! teach him, while your lessons last,
 To judge the present by the past ;
 Remind him of each wish pursued,
 How rich it glow'd with promised good ;

Remind him of each wish enjoy'd,
 How soon his hopes possession cloy'd!
 Tell him we play unequal game,
 Whene'er we shoot by fancy's aim;
 And, ere he strip him for the race,
 Show the conditions of the chase.
 Two sisters by the goal are set,
 Cold Disappointment and Regret:
 One disenchants the winner's eyes,
 And strips of all its worth the prize;
 While one augments its gaudy show,
 More to enhance the loser's woe.
 The victor sees his fairy gold
 Transform'd, when won, to drossy mould:
 But still the vanquish'd mourns his loss,
 And rues, as gold, that glittering dross.

A SCOTTISH WINTER.

No longer autumn's glowing red,
 Upon your forest hills is shed;
 No more beneath the evening beam,
 Fair Tweed reflects their purple gleam;
 Away hath pass'd the heather-bell
 That bloom'd so rich on Needpath fell;
 Sallow his brow, and russet bare
 Are now the sister heights of Yair.
 The sheep before the pinching heaven,
 To shelter'd dale and down are driven,
 Where yet some faded herbage pines,
 And yet a watery sunbeam shines.
 In meek despondency they eye
 The wither'd sward and wintry sky.
 The shepherd shifts his mantle fold,
 And wraps him closer from the cold.
 His dogs no merry circles wheel,
 But, shivering, follow at his heel;
 A cowering glance they often cast,
 As deeper moans the gathering blast.
 My imps, though hardy, bold, and wild,
 As best befits the mountain child,
 Feel the sad influence of the hour,
 And wail the daisy's vanish'd flower;
 Their summer gambols tell, and mourn,
 And anxious ask,—Will spring return,
 And birds and lambs again be gay,
 And blossoms clothe the hawthorn spray?
 Yes, prattlers, yes. The daisy's flower
 Again shall paint your summer bower;
 Again the hawthorn shall supply
 The garlands you delight to tie;

The lambs upon the lea shall bound,
 The wild birds carol to the round,
 And while you frolic light as they,
 Too short shall seem the summer day.

MOUNTAIN SCENERY.

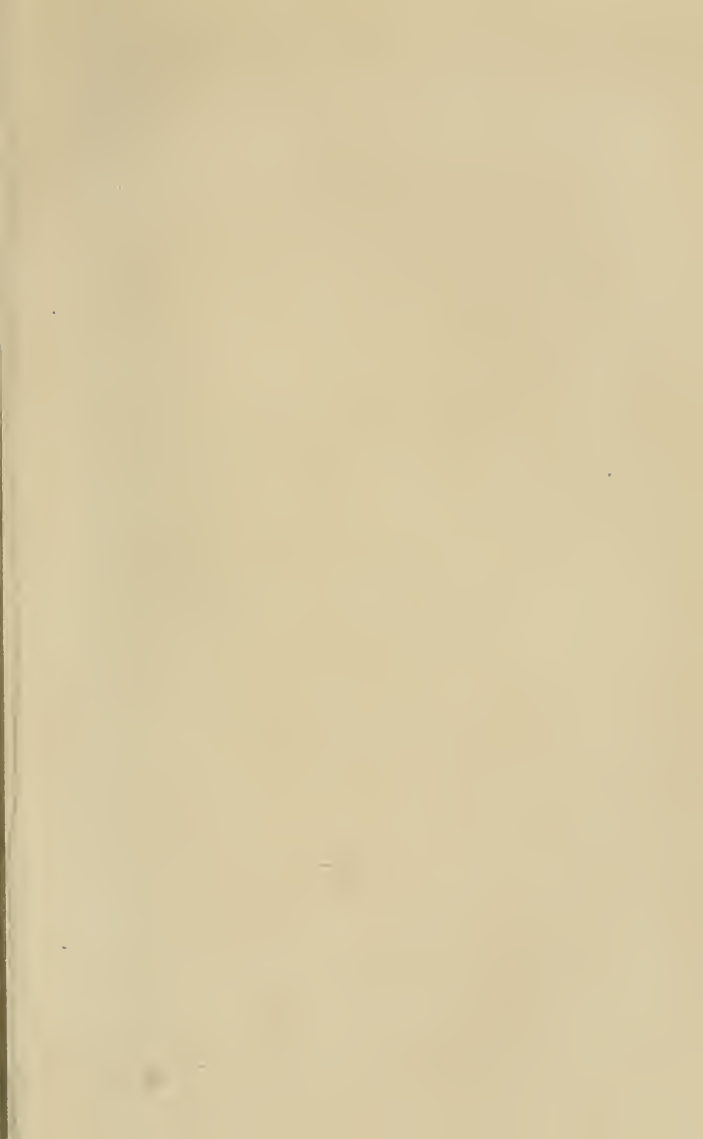
THE western waves of ebbing day
 Roll'd o'er the glen their level way :
 Each purple peak, each flinty spire,
 Was bathed in floods of living fire.
 But not a setting beam could glow
 Within the dark ravine below,
 Where twined the path, in shadow hid,
 Round many a rocky pyramid,
 Shooting abruptly from the dell
 Its thunder-splinter'd pinnacle ;
 Round many an insulated mass,
 The native bulwarks of the Pass ;
 Huge as the tower which builders vain,
 Presumptuous, piled on Shinar's plain,
 The rocky summits, split and rent,
 Form'd turret, dome, or battlement,
 Or seem'd fantastically set
 With cupola or minaret ;
 Crests—wild as pagod ever deck'd,
 Or mosque of Eastern architect.
 Nor were those earth-born castles bare,
 Nor lack'd they many a banner fair,
 For, from their shiver'd brows display'd,
 Far o'er th' unfathomable glade,
 All twinkling with the dewdrops' sheen,
 The brier-rose fell in streamers green.
 And creeping shrubs of thousand dyes,
 Waved in the west wind's summer sighs.
 Boon Nature scatter'd, free and wild,
 Each plant or flower, the mountain's child,
 Here eglantine embalm'd the air,
 Hawthorn and hazel mingled there ;
 The primrose pale and violet flower
 Found in each cliff a narrow bower ;
 Nightshade and foxglove, side by side,
 Emblems of punishment and pride,
 Group'd their dark hues with every stain
 The weatherbeaten crags retain.
 With boughs that quaked at every breath ;
 Gray birch and aspen wept beneath.
 Aloft the ash and warrior oak
 Cast anchor in the rifted rock ;
 And higher yet the pine-tree hung
 His scatter'd trunk, and frequent flung,
 Where seem'd the cliffs to meet on high,
 His boughs athwart the narrow sky.



Not a setting beam could glow
Within the dark ravine below,
Where twined the path, in shadow hid
Round many a rocky pyramid,
Shooting abruptly from the uell
Its thund'ring spinter'd pinnacle.

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Robert Burns

BURNS.

ROBERT BURNS, the Ayrshire bard, so lauded and lionised for a short period of his stormy and checkered career, and comparatively so neglected during his few later years, has at length risen to an elevation in the affections of his countrymen, and of the lovers of song in general, which has no parallel in the annals of literature. Peer and peasant alike, the man of the highest culture and the humblest mechanic and tiller of the soil, have enshrined him in their heart of hearts. The shepherd on Australian and New Zealand plains—the digger in Californian and Columbian mines—the sailor on the deck, and the soldier in his barrack—the colonist on the banks of the St Lawrence, and by the shores of the great American lakes—in short, wherever men of British birth or descent are found, there are the admirers of the Scottish poet, animated by a warmth of admiration which is entirely exceptional; all the warmer, doubtless, because of his marred and imperfect life, and because he who has been the channel of imparting so much happiness to the world was himself, on the whole, so unhappy. Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare have, perhaps, more than other poets, left the impress of their mind on their compatriots; but none of them has leavened the thought and speech of the great mass of his countrymen so thoroughly as Burns, for he was essentially “one of the people” in birth, breeding, and instincts; and, though it is not intended to assert that he equals these intellectual giants in perfect development and poetical results,

he has been taken more closely to men's bosoms than any of them, if we except, perhaps, the bard of Avon, whose admirers belong more exclusively to the educated classes and to habitual play-goers. The poor man, whom Burns's vigorous assertion of the native nobility of manhood has enabled to bear up more courageously under the proud man's contumely and the insolence of office; the patriot, of every social rank, whose sentiments he has clothed in the noblest language; the youthful lover, for whom he has uttered, more exquisitely than himself was able, the sweetest and tenderest accents of passion; the man whose heart glows with sympathy for every living thing, and who sees not even the mouse, "wee sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie," turned up in her nest, nor the "mountain daisy" crushed with the tearing ploughshare, without a pang and an outburst of human feeling, recognise in Burns a munificent benefactor.

Robert Burns was born on the 25th of January 1759, in a humble cottage about two miles south of Ayr, not far from Alloway Kirk and the banks of the Doon, now rendered immortal by his verse. The date of his birth he has quaintly recorded thus:—

"Our monarch's hindmost year but aye
Was five-and-twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hansel in on Robin."

The "Janwar' win'" never ceased long at a time to blow on him; and though he manfully tried to

"Snap his fingers puir and hearty
Before its face,"

it was in the long run too chill for him, and he succumbed under it on the 21st of July 1796, in the thirty-eighth year of his age. His early, and in some respects tragical, death evoked a good deal of sympathy which might have been better displayed during his life—though this is a sore point with his countrymen, and has given rise to animated discussions, in which a good deal has been well said on both sides

of the question, and to which we shall have occasion to refer more fully in the sequel of this biography. His father, William Burness, was a native of Kincardineshire, having been born on the estate of the Earls Marischal, forfeited for their share in the rebellion of 1715. Burns delighted, with all the warmth of a Jacobite minstrel, to imagine his humble "forbears" as having shared in the dangers and sacrifices of the high-born Keiths, though it seems there is no solid foundation for such a supposition. At least, the poet's father took measures to give Jacobite leanings, so far as he was concerned, the most authoritative denial possible among the peasantry of Scotland—a certificate, namely, under the hand of the minister of his native parish, that he had had "no hand in the late wicked rebellion," (1745.) He shaped his course for Edinburgh, where he worked hard as a gardener, and suffered many privations. He afterwards migrated to Ayrshire, serving first one gentleman and then another in the capacity of gardener; and, intending to follow out the profession of a market-gardener, he leased seven acres of land near the bridge of Doon, and built on it a small clay cottage, to which he brought, in December 1757, a young wife, Agnes Brown, the daughter of a Carrick farmer; and Robert Burns, their eldest-born, first saw the light in this "clay bigging," when the "blast o' Janwar' win'" aforesaid blew hansel in on him.

The poet's father was a most remarkable man. His illustrious son said of him:—"He was thrown by early misfortunes on the world at large, where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, for which I am indebted for most of my little pretensions to wisdom. I have met with few who have understood *men, their manners, and their ways* equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man's son." Mr Murdoch, the early and almost only teacher of Burns,

speaks at greater length of the character of William Burness:—"I myself have always considered William Burness as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with, and many a worthy character I have known. I can cheerfully join with Robert in the last line of his epitaph (borrowed from Goldsmith)—

"And even his failings lean'd to virtue's side."

After characterising him as a husband, father, and master, and as to his deportment towards inferiors and superiors, Mr Murdoch proceeds: "But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable William Burness. Time would fail me. I shall only add, that he carefully practised every known duty, and avoided everything that was criminal; or, in the apostle's words, *therein did he exercise himself, in living a life void of offence towards God and towards men*. Oh for a world of men of such dispositions! You will perceive from these few particulars what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet. He spoke the English language with more propriety (both with respect to diction and pronunciation) than any man I ever knew with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, (Robert and Gilbert,) who began to talk and reason like men much sooner than their neighbours."

The Burness family produced also a very respectable and superior man in William's elder brother, who, settling in Montrose, became one of its worthiest and most influential citizens. His son, the poet's cousin, a legal practitioner in that town, who acted so kindly to the poet in his last illness, and to his widow afterwards, was the father of the distinguished Sir Alexander Burnes, whose melancholy fate at Cabul in 1842 excited so much commiseration. It remains to notice the poet's mother, Agnes Brown, who is described as "a very sagacious woman, without any appearance of forwardness or awkwardness of manner," and whom the poet

resembled in appearance and in address more than he did his father, though inheriting from the latter an irritable and melancholy temperament, which frequently brought him to the verge of insanity, and forms after all the best and most honest excuse for those occasional excesses that marked his earlier life, and recurred in his later years with a frequency that rendered his own life miserable, producing the most serious blot his traducers—for he has still traducers—strive to affix to his fame, and which his admirers are concerned not to justify, but to admit in candour and in sorrow of heart, and attempt to refer to constitutional rather than to moral causes. They produced a flaw in a rare jewel which half destroyed its value, and fixed a dark spot on a constellation which would otherwise have been more of “a bright particular star” than it unfortunately is.

In August 1787, when in his twenty-ninth year, Burns addressed an autobiographical letter of great value to Dr Moore, who, as a literary Scotchman, could not but be much interested in such a prodigy as the Ayrshire bard. We will abridge from this what information seems necessary for the portion of his life to which it refers, supplementing it from other sources where it is defective.

For the first six or seven years of his life Burns’s father occupied the small cottage in which the poet was born, acting as gardener to a gentleman of no great estate in the neighbourhood, while the mother managed a small dairy. Wishing to prevent his family from being dispersed as soon as they were able to do farm-work of the humblest kind, William Burness, with the assistance of his master, entered, at Whitsuntide 1766, on a lease of the small farm of Mount Oliphant. But the poverty of the soil, and the want of capital, rendered it a ruinous affair; and the “laird” meanwhile having died, and the management of his affairs having fallen into the hands of a merciless “factor”—a sort of being detested by humble Scotchmen—the lease was broken after about twelve years of it had run. The family then removed

to Lochlea, in the parish of Torbolton—(Mount Oliphant is in Ayr parish)—a farm larger and better, and for four years fortune seemed to smile on them; but a misunderstanding having arisen as to the conditions of the lease, and the matter having been submitted to the proper legal tribunals, and decided against William Burness, that worthy man—his substance swallowed up in the vortex of litigation, and his family brought to the brink of ruin—was kindly released, on the 13th of February 1784, from further contention with adverse circumstances, harsh factors, and litigious landlords, by

“Death, the poor man’s dearest friend,
The kindest and the best.”

That in this man lay imbedded not only the elements, but existed in full development all the ingredients of what makes a hero—above all, “the stalk of carl-hemp in man,” the firm resolve and spirit of independence, so much talked about—so much longed for, but never possessed in any really useful or practical degree by the poet, is patent to all who have studied his history. In fact, he possessed them so fully, that, coupled with his native irascibility, it is not to be wondered at if he insisted on his rights, or his supposed rights, with a rigour and tenacity that may partly explain the troubles of his life. But this true manhood, heroism, and sterling worth can never be so well appreciated or estimated as in connexion with his exertions and sacrifices for the education of his family—a consideration usually so dear to the Scottish peasant—which we will now briefly record.

When he was six years of age the poet was sent to a school at Alloway Mill, taught by a person who soon after received a more valuable appointment. William Burness, in conjunction with several neighbours, then engaged a young man, Mr John Murdoch, already referred to, agreeing to pay him a small quarterly salary, and to lodge him alternately in their houses. This mode of securing the services of a teacher in the more thinly-inhabited districts of Scotland is not yet obsolete; and we have known young men, who have been thus

humbly employed, and apparently in a position less comfortable and independent than that of an ordinary hind, ultimately rise to eminence, and what in Scotland may be termed high social rank, as ministers of the Word, intermarrying with the "landed gentry," and sitting honoured guests at the tables of noblemen. Murdoch became greatly attached to Robert Burns and his younger brother Gilbert, but above all to their father, whom we have already seen him describe as a model of every Christian virtue. The boys were taught by him reading, writing, arithmetic, and grammar, in all of which, thanks to Murdoch's enthusiasm, and to the father's rational system of conversing with the boys on the subjects of their education and fully explaining every difficulty as it arose in the course of their studies, they made extraordinary proficiency. That household must have been a singularly interesting one after the hours of labour were over;—the young ardent teacher, the upright, faithful, kindly-severe father, the mother looking in that father's face, and listening to his discourse as if he were of men the chief, the two brothers, both so superior to what is found at their age, all intent on the work of education proceeding in a style and spirit so strangely at variance with its humble environments. For Murdoch seems to have anticipated most of what have been ranked as modern improvements in teaching; making his pupils "turn verse into its natural prose order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words; and to supply all the ellipses." Gilbert, and not Robert, would have been fixed upon by him as the likely poet, he being of a "merry," while Robert was of a "sad," countenance; but the poetic temperament is often a melancholy one, deep flashes of merriment streaking fitfully the prevailing gloom. And strange, that poet who more than any other has not merely married immortal verse to music, but has produced so prodigally verse that is itself the most exquisite music, had "an ear remarkably dull, and a voice untunable." As a not unnatural concomitant of his

melancholy face was, what he himself calls, an enthusiastic idiot piety, and a boundless, though fearful, delight in all tales of superstition and *diablerie*. "In my infant and boyish days, I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poetry, but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical than I am in such matters, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors." This enumeration of the subjects of supernatural tradition is exhaustive, one might say, and highly characteristic; but that Betty Davidson discoursed to the youthful bard on each and all of these wondrous themes, is doubtless a poetic, though allowable, exaggeration, and shows how well he had been tutored in mystical lore, and how admirably fitted he was to give out in one rich resistless stream of the happiest diction, such poems as *Halloween* and *Tam o' Shanter*, the conception of them having, apparently, risen without effort in his mind, full, finished, and unhampered as it now appears in his works. It recalls at once that passage of his *Address to the Deil*—

"I've heard my reverend grannie say,
 In lanely glens ye like to stray;
 Or where auld ruin'd castles, gray,
 Nod to the moon,
 Ye fright the nightly wanderer's way
 Wi' eldritch croon.

"When twilight did my grannie summon,
 To say her prayers, douce honest woman!
 Aft yont the dike she's heard you bummin',
 Wi' eerie drone;
 Or, rustlin', through the boortrees comin',
 Wi' heavy groan.

“Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
 The stars shot down wi’ sklentint’ light,
 Wi’ you, mysel, I gat a fright
 Ayont the lough;
 Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
 Wi’ wavin’ sough.

“The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
 Each bristled hair stood like a stake,
 When wi’ an eldritch, stoor quaick—quaick—
 Amang the springs,
 Awa ye squatter’d, like a drake,
 On whistling wings.”

On referring to the poem it will be seen that almost every item in the dreadful catalogue has a place in it, and a few to boot.

What further teaching, in the common acceptation of the term, was got by our poet may be very shortly stated. After Mr Murdoch left for another situation, which was about two years after the family had settled in Mount Oliphant, the father undertook to teach his sons arithmetic by candle-light in the winter evenings, the labour of the boys being required on the farm. He was at this time almost their sole companion, and to his enlightened, manly, and Christian conversation—for he treated them as men—most salutary influences were brought to bear on their moral and intellectual natures. To improve their penmanship, they were sent week about, during a summer quarter, to the parish school of Dalrymple. This happened when Burns was thirteen or fourteen years old. “The good man,” says Mr Lockhart, “could not pay two fees, or his two boys could not be spared at the same time from the labour of the farm.” The circumstances of the family were at this time most unpropitious. The threatening letters of the factor, which used to set them all in tears, the unproductive farm, the necessity of doing all the work on it among themselves, and of opposing to these wretched conditions the most stubborn resolution and rigid economy, brought it about that the future poet, toiling beyond his strength, and without a suffi-

ciency of nutritious food, never overcame in his appearance and constitution the exertions and privations of that trying and depressing period. But the family clung all the more fondly to each other, and acquired a distant and reserved air, the result of honest pride struggling under disastrous fortunes, which their neighbours attributed to unworthy motives. Next year, Mr Murdoch having received an appointment in Ayr, Burns went one week before harvest, and two after it, to brush up his learning under his old master, sharing with him the same room and bed. The first week was devoted to English grammar, and the other two to a flirtation—a warm if a short one—with French, a language in which Murdoch became extraordinarily proficient. Burns laboured at this new study with such eagerness and success that he could, according to his brother, translate any ordinary prose author: and we know that to the last he loved to interlard his correspondence with phrases from that language. And when he bethought himself of attempting, in later life, a dramatic composition, among the books he ordered from Edinburgh was a copy of Molière.

The amount and value of his education, however, is not to be judged from these fragmentary school-attendances. He had emphatically “the open eye” which enables its possessor to unlock mysteries never known to many after educational resources have been exhausted, and which gives really a royal road to knowledge. Besides, he had read and digested at an early age many valuable and some ponderous books. His father had borrowed for his reading in addition to his own scanty stock; and wealthy families in Ayr, as well as humble families nearer home, gave him free access to what books of theirs he wished to read. And the manner in which he had been initiated into the proper method of getting at the meaning of an author, coupled with his own clear insight, made his reading greatly different in its effect from the slipshod skimming of frivolous books which is too commonly dignified with that name at the present day. He read the usual

school-books, especially the Bible and *Mason's Collection*. Then *The Life of Hannibal*, which awoke within him the martial spirit; and *The Life of Wallace*, which, he says, "poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest." In addition to these, let us note as differing widely from each other in subject-matter and spirit, and evincing great intellectual appetite and catholicity in their student, *Salmon's Geographical Grammar*, *Derham's Physico-Theology*, *Ray's Wisdom of God in the Works of Creation*; *The Spectator*, *Pope's Homer*, *Pope's Works*; two volumes of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and two of *Peregrine Pickle*; *Stackhouse's History of the Bible*, *Taylor on Original Sin*, *Hervey's Meditations*; works on gardening and agriculture; *Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding*; *Works of Allan Ramsay*; several plays of Shakespeare; a collection of letters; and a select collection of English songs. These last two were great favourites of his. A relative having asked in a book-shop in Ayr for a letter-writer, one of those things in which apprentices and cook-maids find models for their tender correspondence, was furnished instead with a collection of letters by distinguished writers, prefaced with a few simple directions to acquire an easy epistolary style. This Burns studied carefully, and even in early life was very ambitious in his letters to his young friends; and, comparing theirs in reply with his own, of which he retained copies, was sufficiently self-conscious to note and be pleased with his own superiority. To the last his letters betray a labouredness resulting in a want of ease, except those to a few very intimate friends, to whom he poured out the spontaneous feelings of his heart, in chaste, nervous diction. The *Collection of Songs* was his *vade mecum*; he carried it constantly with him; separated what was the genuine in sentiment and expression from what was fustian and rant; and ascribes to those criticisms by hedgerow and along the highway much of that knowledge of his art to which he ultimately attained.

Daily converse with a man like his father, high-spirited, grave, possessed of knowledge and eager for more, full of Christian feeling, versed in speculative theology, and practised in theological dispute, was in itself no mean educational item. Combine with these the man's life-long and scarcely effectual efforts to keep the wolf from the door, and the self-denial necessary to effect it, demanded from and cheerfully given by himself and his family, and the high style of his thought and character affecting the household to quite a noticeable and noted extent, together with the patriarchal priestly functions performed by him in no formal perfunctory spirit, but in one of godly sincerity, and we have before us a school in which much is to be learned never dreamed of in the highest seminaries—a school eminently qualified to repress conceit, the bane of mere book-taught men—a school in which charity and sympathy with human suffering, and, perhaps, a tear for human frailty, may be found; where a desire for all useful knowledge, but, above all, for the knowledge which is not of this world, is most aptly engendered. In the *Cotter's Saturday Night*, which has thrown a halo of poetry around the life of the Scottish peasant that could never have been dreamt of as possible by many even in our own land, and is never almost associated with the idea of peasant life elsewhere, we have a noble picture of him drawn by a son whose failings never completely quenched the holy fire from that household altar which had been lighted up in his heart—the altar of the humble hallowed cottage of William Burness.

“The cheerfu’ supper done, wi’ serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o’er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha’ Bible, once his father’s pride;
His bonnet rev’rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And ‘Let us worship God!’ he says with solemn air.

"They chant their artless notes in simple guise ;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim," &c.

"The priest-like father reads the sacred page," &c.

"Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays," &c.

"Then homeward all take off their several way,
The youngling cottagers retire to rest :
The parent pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He, who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide ;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside."

The fire of love was now stirred within him, and simultaneously the desire to rhyme. The passion for the sex was the strongest in his nature, and for six or seven years he was, without the least tinge of impropriety, under the influence of "dear, deluding woman, the joy of joys," and his life, despite the hardships of his lot, one delicious dream. Hitherto he had been an awkward, shy, retiring boy ; but now his partner in the harvest-rig, a *bonnie, sweet, sonsie lassie*, "unwittingly to herself," he says, "initiated me in that delicious passion which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below !" She sang sweetly, and it was to her favourite reel that he composed his first song, *Handsome Nell*, which, poor as it is, from the circumstances of innocent rapture, and the revelation of the world of love under which it was composed, always strongly affected him. In one of his poems in reference to his early days occurs the following noble passage :—

"E'en then a wish, I mind its power,
A wish that to its latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast :
That I for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least.

"The rough bur-thistle spreading wide
Amang the bearded bear,
I turn'd the weeder-clips aside,
And spared the symbol dear."

He whose bosom was stirred with such desires was no vulgar youth. This enthusiasm, this unselfishness of young ambition under the promptings of patriotic fire, and the premonitions of budding irrepressible genius, whose only wish is to give the fruit of his faculties for the service of his country, forms one of the most modest and affecting pictures in the history of genius.

He appears to have been less devoted to literature and the Muse for some time after settling at Lochlea than his previous enthusiasm and progress might have led us to expect. But, though love was always his main inspiration, he was now so absorbed in his rustic amours,—which were matters possessing all the fascination of novelty for him, and which, prosecuted in conformity with the usages of the district, not yet obsolete, might keep him abroad half the night, and involve the travelling of many miles, going and coming—that for some time he gave little vent to his feelings in song. His labours on the farm were also of the most arduous kind, and for a short time he attended a dancing-school, (he ever after excelled in dancing, and was fond of it;) so that, between the tumult of his youthful feelings, the demand on his energies of his daily toil, the dancing-school, and the diplomacy necessary for success in his own love affairs, and to secure that of his fellow-rustics with their simple maidens—for he was the confidant of half the lovers in the parish—his time was tolerably well occupied. A piece, however, written at this period, beginning

"I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing,"

shows that his powers were maturing, though it lacks the originality of his later efforts, being evidently suggested by, and moulded on, Mrs Cockburn's "Flowers of the Forest."

In his nineteenth summer he was sent to Kirkoswald

Parish School to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c. ; and in these he made good progress. The teacher had great local fame as a mathematician, and Burns's maternal uncle, who resided in the neighbourhood, welcomed his nephew to bed and board. Thus he could prosecute his studies at no great expense—a very material consideration. This episode in his life coloured its whole future texture ; for the acquaintance with practical mathematics he acquired here suggested and qualified him for the Excise as a means of living ; and, Kirkoswald parish having a coast line of six miles, the farmers were all more or less engaged in smuggling, and led a rough, roaring, hearty life ; and here Burns first learned to mingle in a drunken squabble, and was introduced to a freedom of life and conversation unknown to his earlier years. Superstition flourished here in unabated strength ; and in Douglas Graham and his wife Helen M'Taggart, notorious for her superstitious beliefs and fears, he became acquainted with Tam o' Shanter and his "ain wife Kate," of whom he made such excellent use afterwards. Despite occasional dissipation, however, "I went on," he says, "with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo—a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my *sines* and *co-sines* a few days more ; but, stepping into the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel,

" ' Like Proserpine, gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower.' "

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I stayed I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her ; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless." His sojourn at Kirkoswald had much improved him. He had considerably extended his

reading ; he had, in common with a schoolfellow, exercised himself in debate, and laid a firm foundation for fluent and correct utterance on any subject presented for his consideration. He had seen life under a new phase, and had become acquainted with some originals whom, as already mentioned, he afterwards worked up as the materials of poetry.

For three or four years after this, his life at Lochlea was one of arduous rural labour. He still extended his reading, and indulged occasionally in verse-making. He fell seriously in love with the daughter of a small farmer at service in his neighbourhood, and several of his letters to her are in existence. They are conceived and expressed with so much purity as well of thought as of diction, (there is an elevation about them, somewhat stilted, it must be confessed,) which, written as they were by a peasant with an income of seven pounds a year, to a girl hired to do the drudgery about a humble farm, renders them almost unique as literary curiosities. He meant to marry this rustic beauty ; and, long after he had seen the most celebrated women of the day in Edinburgh and elsewhere, he owned that never had he met with one who inspired him with equal respect—with one whose companionship would have so soothed the demon in his blood—as would that of the daughter of the Galston farmer. That he might be in a position to marry, he resolved to learn flax-dressing. His brother and he had already grown flax on a portion of the farm rented from their father. It was at Irvine, a small Ayrshire seaport, where he commenced training for this new mode of life. His sustenance here seems to have consisted chiefly of oatmeal supplied from home ; but, his sweetheart having discarded him, he became a prey to his constitutional melancholy, and he wrote to his father in the strain of one tired of this world, and longing for the next.

But it was not in his nature to be long of one mood. During the carousals of the New-Year his flax-shop took fire, and he was left, “like a true poet, not worth a six-

pence." It may be divined that he was not worth much more before the fire. The greatest alteration in his condition, however, induced by his connexion with Irvine, was that he here mixed with some characters of loose morals, and lost that virgin purity of soul, and freedom from personal taint, which had hitherto characterised him. One individual he himself mentions as "a very noble character," who, uniting to the levity of a sailor great strength of character and warmth of heart—one of the first, too, who urged him to print his poems as possessing genuine excellence—was a most dangerous associate and Mentor to one of such impetuous blood. Not long after he wrote, *The Poet's Welcome to his Illegitimate Child*, and, according to the custom of the time and place, had to appear in his parish church on the stool of repentance. We believe Burns sincerely repented of his conduct; and that the two or three poems written in reference to this unfortunate affair, treating it in a strain of most reprehensible levity, though with great comic *vis* and picturesqueness of expression, resulted from the same feelings that make a wretch at Newgate resolve to die *game*. This was the great turning point in Burns's career as a man. He had lost caste with many whose good opinion was not only desirable but valuable. He had formed habits and intimacies not calculated to benefit him in any way. By presenting vice to his own mind, though only as it were in self-defence and by way of bravado, as a thing to be treated comically, he undermined the props of virtue reared so assiduously by his noble father; and laid the foundations for much of the misery, self-accusation, and calumny which embittered his after life.

It was during this period that the Torbolton Bachelors' Club was formed, consisting of a few young men of active inquiring intellects. The members met periodically and engaged in a prearranged debate. The club-room was in a public-house, but the members' expenses were limited to threepence each night. Burns was the master spirit of the

club; and the intellectual gladiatorship here indulged in, as formerly at Kirkoswald, was of immense after-benefit to him. He also became connected with a lodge of Freemasons, but whether *their* nightly expenses were by statute limited to threepence, is nowhere entered on the record; though it may be inferred from these lines of a well-known poem—

“The clachan yill had made me canty—
I was na fou, but just had plenty”—

that the masonic ideas of brotherly compotation were more liberal.

Gilbert Burns thought his brother was more charming and fascinating at this period of his life than at any other; more light-hearted and humorous; more self-denying and considerate, and a universal favourite. At their daily labour, or in their Sunday walks, *ennui* was impossible with so brilliant and kindly a companion. What bursts of humour, melting into pathos as the thought of suffering or hardship to any living thing flashed across his mind; what “fancies, chaste and noble;” what kindlings of patriotism over the tale of “Scotia’s ill-requited chief;” what conning of old songs, what choice “readings from the best authors,” must not have lighted up the intercourse of Robert and Gilbert Burns, and made the bleak fields of Scotia an enchanted Arcadia!

Of the poems written at Lochlea we have already mentioned one. He had sketched the outlines of a tragedy, but family misfortunes prevented its being ever seriously begun. *Winter, a Dirge*, a piece of admirable versification; *The Death of Poor Mailie*; *John Barleycorn*, and three fine songs, are mentioned by himself in his letter to Dr Moore as belonging to this period. *Poor Mailie* is one of the very happiest of his earliest efforts, exhibiting what Burns especially excelled in, humour and fancy commingled. The pictures of Hughoe “wi’ glowering een and lifted hand,” and of poor Mailie, as “owre she warsled in the ditch,” are perfect. The pawkiness of *The Dying Words* has its source in the shrewdness and real kindness of the poet’s nature, and “the light that never

was on sea or shore" gleams wondrously from this unpretending strain. How carefully he revised his Scottish poems, and how refined and matured his taste, may be learned from his extruding from the corrected copy of the *Elegy* these two lines, that would have been religiously retained by a poet of inferior taste and genius :—

"Noo Robin, greetin', chews the hams
O' Mailie dead !"

From the poems of this period take the following characteristic touches. His manly pride, to which even his affections were sacrificed, is well illustrated in these homely lines :—

"I lo'e her mysel, but darena weel tell,
My poverty keeps me in awe, man,
For making o' rhymes, and working at times,
Does little or naething at a', man.

"Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse,
Nor ha'e't in her power to say na, man,
For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
My stomach's as proud as them a', man."

The subjoined piece of "rustic hamely jingle," shows that, even at this early age and in this obscure situation, fame, the last infirmity of noble minds, was not indifferent to him, nor deemed beyond his reach :—

"Then out into the world my course I did determine, O ;
Though to be rich was not my wish, *yet to be great was charming, O :*
My talents they were not the worst, nor yet my education, O ;
Resolved was I, at least to try, to mend my situation, O."

As has already been stated, Burns's father died at Lochlea on the 13th of February 1784, his end having been embittered by a harassing and unsuccessful litigation. To provide a shelter for the family against the evil day they saw approaching, Robert and Gilbert had leased the uplying farm of Mossgiel, in the neighbouring parish of Mauchline. The poet commenced his new career with a firm resolution to succeed, if success were attainable by strict devotion to the duties that lay before him. But bad seed the first year, and a late harvest the second, lost him half his crops, and, to use

his own words, "I returned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." The Mossgiel era was the determining one of his fortunes and of his pursuits. He here recognised the Muse as his calling. Here in about fifteen months he produced the bulk of those remarkable poems by which his fame was established, and on which it will continue mainly to rest; here he experienced the most exalted ecstasy and the profoundest grief the siren Love can administer; here hungry ruin had him so in the wind that the greatest living poet saw no release from the evils wound round him by adverse fortune but expatriation to tasks and scenes the most alien; here he resolved to give his poems to the world; and hence, the cloud of misery which enveloped him melting away to reveal a purer ether, he was summoned to Edinburgh to a short-lived and luckless ovation.

In the summer of 1784 he was in ill health and worse spirits. Several poems then written reveal him under the pangs of remorse, conscious of errors, imploring Divine forgiveness, and with his thoughts fixed on the life beyond life. It is characteristic that he pleads the strength of his passions as a mitigation of his criminality, thus making the Judge an accessory to the offence. It is also remarkable that, in the midst of his despondency, he sometimes brightened up into wildly licentious humour, as in his epistle to

"Rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale o' cocks for fun and driukin'!"

Soon after he commenced to reside at Mossgiel, he "foregathered" with Jean Armour, the most famous, as his after poems rendered her, of his many loves. She was the daughter of a respectable master-mason, and

"A dancin', swcet, young, handsome quean,
Of guileless heart."

Of the six Mauchline belles whom he has described, he says—

"But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'."

He was deeply attached to her, more so than he himself knew, till circumstances threatened to deprive him of her altogether. But we are anticipating.

The earliest of his poems which attracted particular notice was connected with a dispute in matters theological then agitating Scotland, but more especially the west country, the scene of the sufferings and triumphs of the Covenanters, and still in Burns's time famous for its adherence, among the common people at least, to the strictest dogmas of Calvin. In this district, to a notable degree, theological disputation was the chief intellectual discipline of the popular mind, and in the churchyard, before and after service, many and high were the debates

"Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate;
Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute."

Burns, as might have been expected, entered fiercely into these disputes, and from the vigour of his intellect and the force and felicity of his diction, was a formidable champion or assailant. Above all, the fearless freedom of his remarks, and his resistless humour, made him peculiarly obnoxious to the "unco guid, or rigidly righteous" of the district. At this time some of the local clergy were tinged with views leaning more to Arminianism than to the Calvinism of the

"Orthodox, orthodox; wha believe in John Knox,"

in some cases even verging close upon Socinianism. Burns's father had formed opinions with regard to these thorny theological tenets more humane than, as appears to many, the doctrines of Calvin are. These views he had embodied in a little manuscript volume for the guidance of his family. Among William Burness's books was *Taylor on the Doctrine of Original Sin*; and, doubtless, Burns, who was such an omnivorous reader, had in his earlier years studied it attentively, all the more so that it was very probably a favourite with his father. Dr Macgill of Ayr had published an essay which was held to contain heterodox views of the doctrine

of Original Sin. A few clergymen, and many of the better educated and more liberal of the upper classes, sympathised with Macgill, while the bulk of the clergy, and the common people almost to a man, were opposed to *New Light* doctrines, adhering steadily to the *Auld Light*. Among those who took part against Macgill was "Daddie Auld," the minister of Mauchline, before whom Burns had already appeared in open church, and done penance as to the matter of

"Sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess ;"

and, though Auld had only been performing a very disagreeable duty, the poet would not regard him or his opinions with much complacency. Besides, Burns's landlord, Gavin Hamilton, a friend of "Glib-tongued Aiken," who had defended Macgill before the church courts, and a high-spirited, liberal-minded, generous gentleman, was at feud with Daddie Auld and his session concerning some imputed irregularities, which kirk-sessions in those days were not slow to note and censure. Burns, his own wound fresh, came all the more readily to the assistance of his landlord against what, under any circumstances, he would have deemed petty and oppressive meddling, particularly as he could not but be more than dubious of the morality of some of the more officious and forward of the elders. It cannot be doubted that he often said and wrote things to make people stare, and there is a story that he was seen lounging on horse-back before a Mauchline public-house door on the afternoon of a "preaching Monday," and delivering himself with such reckless freedom on the disputed theological tenets of the day to a group of villagers, that he was fairly hissed off the scene.

Before proceeding, however, to notice those poems evoked by the religious bickerings of the district, we will hurriedly glance at one or two pieces produced now, which mark clearly the great advances he had made in his art, and some of which he hardly ever surpassed. In the epistle to "Davie,"

a brother poet, a spirit of discontent, at least of something approaching it, is manifested as he contemplates the unequal distribution of the gifts of fortune, and his own humble position and obscure destiny. He then broaches, and not for the last time, the idea of resorting, if the worst should happen, to the "jolly beggar's" trade, and sets off against the hardships of that calling a highly poetical enumeration of its privileges.

"What though, like commoners of air,
 We wander out we know not where,
 But either house or hal' ?
 Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
 The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
 Are free alike to all.
 In days when daisies deck the ground,
 And blackbirds whistle clear,
 With honest joy our hearts will bound
 To see the coming year :
 On braes when we please, then,
 We'll sit and sowth a tune ;
 Syne rhyme till 't, we'll time till 't,
 And sing 't when we hae dune."

His haughty spirit was even now measuring itself with the mere minions of wealth, and seeking in the sweets of friendship and love compensation for the want of title, rank, and riches.

Death and Dr Hornbook, another production of this period, is inimitable. In the Torbolton Mason Lodge, Burns and the parish dominie were rival wits. The dominie was full of conceit, and to his scholastic functions had superadded those of apothecary and physician. One night he seems to have been more than usually ostentatious of his medical skill; and as the poet trudged along by "Willie's Mill," the whimsical idea of death, with his scythe and leister, flashed upon his brain, and the result was a poem in the very highest vein of the humorous and grotesque. The two epistles to J. Lapraik are extremely pleasing, exhibiting the poet in the first flush and conscious inspiration of the Muse, and plainly indicating that he had found his calling. The sentiments,

despite some rustic snarling at schools and colleges, are manly and generous, and exhibit the poet in a most amiable light. He still has a grudge at wealth and its votaries, and rants nobly over friendship and native manhood.

“ But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
‘ Each aid the others,’
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers ! ”

To revert to the theological frenzy by which the West was possessed, we find Burns, in an epistle to *Goudie*, *terror of the Whigs*, (a Kilmarnock tradesman who had published a volume of Essays discussing the authority of the Scriptures,) associating Goudie with Taylor of Norwich as the two great assailants and underminers of orthodoxy. In the same epistle we have mention of “ Black Jock,” the favourite butt of Burns’s wicked humour, then a clergyman in Kilmarnock, but afterwards translated to Stirling. By all accounts the Reverend John Russell must have been “ a gruesome carle.” There is a tradition in Kilmarnock that he patrolled the streets on Sundays, grasping a huge cudgel which he had christened his “ ruling elder,” and beat Sabbath-breakers into their homes.* He was a huge black-visaged man, with the voice of Stentor. Says Professor Wilson :—“ We remember walking one day—unknown to us a fast-day—in the neighbourhood of an ancient fortress, (Stirling,) and hearing a noise to be likened to nothing imaginable in this earth but the bellowing of a buffalo fallen into a trap upon a tiger, which, as we came within half a mile of the castle, we discerned to be the voice of a pastor engaged in public prayer. His physiognomy was little less alarming than his voice, and his sermon corresponded with his looks and his lungs—the whole being, indeed, an extraordinary exhibition of divine worship. We can never think it sinful that Burns

* See Mackay’s *History of Kilmarnock*, third edition, 1864, page 103.

should have been humorous on such a pulpiteer; and if we shudder at some of the verses in which he seems yet alive, it is not at the satirest."

"Black Jock," otherwise "Rumble John," had a zealous coadjutor in Alexander Moody, "Singet Sawney," minister of the neighbouring parish of Riccarton; but these worthies having had a difference, fell foul of each other in a meeting of presbytery, and in their wrath uttered language so offensive and unbecoming that the godly were scandalised, and the adherents of the *New Light* doctrines in an ecstasy of delight. On this occasion Burns produced *The Twa Herds, or the Holy Tulzie*, which, "with a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, met with a roar of applause." This was followed shortly after by *Holy Willie's Prayer*, the most daring exposition of Calvinism ever given to the world. Viewed in some aspects it might be justly characterised as profane; but taken in connexion with the cant and hypocrisy of the more prominent sticklers for orthodoxy, and read now in the light of the known debauchery and dishonesty of its mouthpiece, Willie Fisher, it is one of the most terrible satires ever written; nor can it be said to transgress the bounds of satiric exposition. With the *Holy Fair*, however, no shadow of fault can be found in the way of profanity. We have here the comic Muse in her most legitimate and attractive guise. And as FUN points out to the bard SUPERSTITION and HYPOCRISY as the objects of laughter, we too join in the mirth; nor are the sanctities of religion in aught violated, nor the mysteries of the sacramental supper ever once alluded to throughout the whole poem. Nay, the interior of the house of God is never entered; and though that "God's acre," in which "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep," where the comedy is chiefly enacted, ought to have stirred holiest thoughts within the breasts of those assembled for the celebration of the great Christian festival, the poet merely describes what he saw, and might have seen in many churchyards besides that of

Mauchline. It is understood that the publication of the *Holy Fair* struck a fatal blow at the absurdities and indecencies which usually attended those sacramental gatherings.

Halloween is a happy effort. In it, as in the *Holy Fair*, it was evident that national manners were once more in the hands of a national poet. The superstitious observances and prying into the future handed down from Druidical times, and fascinating to the vulgar mind at all times, are in *Halloween* felicitously touched off, while over all breathes a fine spirit of fun, shrewd observation, and healthful humanity. Haveril Will, wee Jenny and her granny, who "fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt," fechtin' Jamie Fleck, and Leezie the wanton widow, are alive in this exquisite idyll. The following description of a brook in moonlight has been often admired and quoted :—

"Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel,
Unseen that night."

It is to be observed that the rustic merry-makers are sufficiently engrossed in their eerie revels to need no artificial stimulants; for

"Wi' merry sangs, and friendly cracks,
I wat they didna weary;
And unco tales, and funny jokes,
Their sports were cheap and cheery;
Till butter'd so'ns, wi' fragrant lunt,
Set a' their gabs a-steerin';
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
They parted aff careerin'
Fu' blithe that night."

The *Address to the Deil* is a universal favourite. The ridiculous and the sublime are happily blended, and the tone of jocular familiarity assumed towards so great a power—

exhibited also in *Death and Doctor Hornbook*—is peculiar to Burns. Many great poets have treated of the Devil, but all in the highest mode of seriousness. The familiar hail-fellow-well-met feeling belongs to Burns alone, as well as the inimitable relenting of the concluding stanza :—

“ But fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben !
 O wad ye tak a thought and men' !
 Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
 Still hae a stake—
 I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
 Even for your sake ! ”

The Jolly Beggars is another poem of this period, and is, as a whole, in conception and execution, the most finished and artistic of all his works ; but it was not published during his life. It is highly dramatic. The curtain exhibits a biting eve in the end of autumn, or beginning of winter. The withered leaves strew the earth, or waver in the northern blast.

“ Hailstones drive wi' bitter skyte,
 And infant frosts begin to bite,
 In hoary cranreuch drest.”

Such is the aspect of the evening. The description chills the blood, but the curtain rises, and in Poosie Nancy's humble hostelry such a jovial scene of ragged revelry, quaffing, laughing, jumping, thumping, blazing fire, warm blankets and usquebae, is revealed, as even the gods might regard with complacency. The maimed soldier and his doxy, poor Merry Andrew, the raucle Carlin, the wee Apollo, the Caird, and the wight of Homer's craft, are sketched with firm and skilful hand. It is in its minute fidelity like a picture of Teniers. Next day the tatterdemalions, with their budgets, bags, and wallets, will be wandering with their ready trick and fable, and next eve in new combinations will rescue a few hours' mad revelry from unpropitious fate.

Of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* we have already spoken. It is the most unstained and equal of all his efforts, and exhibits him in the most interesting light. It came warm and

gushing from the heart, and, more than any of his poems, exhibits that warmth of devotional feeling and of natural piety which was a marked feature of his genius. It procured for him the acquaintance and friendship of Mrs Dunlop, a descendant of the Wallaces of Elderslie, and in Scotland considered as belonging to the family of the great patriot himself. The *Address to a Mouse* and *The Mountain Daisy* are universally known and admired, especially for the humane interest displayed in them, and for the analogy drawn by the bard himself between their hapless fate and his own.

It could not be otherwise than clear to himself that poetry was his calling, and the various pieces now composed must have been prepared with a half-conscious view to publication. He knew he was a poet—he recognised the sacredness of the Divine gift—and foreshadowed, even in the auld clay biggin' of Mossgiel, before he had committed a line to the press, his own immortality. In the *Epistle to William Simpson*, he says :—

“Auld Coila now may fidge fu' fain,
 She's gotten poets o' her ain,
 Chiefs wha their chanter's winna hain,
 But tune their lays,
 Till echoes a' resound again
 Her weel-sung praise.

.

“Ramsay and famous Fergusson
 Gied Forth and Tay a lift aboon ;
 Yarrow and Tweed, to monie a tune,
 Owre Scotland rings ;
 While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, and Doon,
 Naeboddy sings.

“Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, and Seine,
 Glide sweet in monie a tuncfu' line ;
 But, Willie, set your fit to mine,
 And cock your crest,
 We'll gar our streams and burnies shine,
 Up wi' the best !

"We'll sing auld Coila's plains and fells,
 Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
 Her banks and braes, her dens and dells,
 Where glorious Wallace
 Aft bure the gree, as story tells,
 Frae southron billies.

"At Wallace' name what Scottish blood
 But boils up in a spring-tide flood !
 Oft have our fearless fathers strode
 By Wallace' side,
 Still pressing onward, *red-wat shod*,
 Or glorious died !

"The Muse, nae poet ever fand her,
 Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander,
 Adown some trotting burn's meander,
 And no think lang ;
O sweet, to stray and pensive ponder
A heartfelt sang !

"The war'ly race may drudge and drive,
 Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch, and strive ;
Let me fair Nature's face describe,
 And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
 Bum owre their treasure."

The same devotion to poesy, and resolve to make it its own reward, is expressed somewhat more jocularly in the *Epistle to James Smith* :—

"Gie dreeping roasts to country lairds,
 Till icicles hing frae their beards ;
 Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards,
 And maids of honour !
 And yill and whisky gie to cairds,
 Until they sconner.

"A title, Dempster merits it ;
 A garter gie to Willie Pitt ;
 Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
 In cent. per cent. :
But gie me real, sterling wit,
 And I'm content.

"While ye are pleased to keep me hale,
 I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
 Be't water-brose, or muslin-kail,
 Wi' cheerfu' face,
As lang's the Muses dinna fail
 To say the grace."

But the final dedication to the Muse, and his consecration by her, are presented with singular vividness and power in *The Vision*, a poem of the very highest excellence.

- “The thrasher’s weary fingin’-tree
The lee-lang day had tired me;
And when the day had closed his c’e,
Far i’ the west,
Ben i’ the spence, right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.
- “There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek,
I sat and eyed the spewin’ reek,
That fill’d, wi’ hoast-provoking smeck,
The auld clay-biggin’;
And heard the restless rattous squeak
About the riggin’.
- “All in this mottie, mistie clime,
I backward mused on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu’ prime,
And done nae thing
But stringin’ blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.
- “Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank, and clarkit
My cash-account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
Is a’ th’ amount.
- “I started, muttering, ‘Blockhead! coof!’
And heaved on high my waukit loof,
To swear by a’ yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I henceforth would be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath:
- “When, click! the string the snick did draw;
And, jee! the door gaed to the wa’;
And by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin’ bright,
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw,
Come full in sight.”

Then follows a noble description of the Muse of Coila. On “her mantle large, of greenish hue,” the bard saw depicted the rivers, mountains, and towns of his native district; while the heroic forms of the Wallaces, and of the “sceptred Pic-

tish shade," as well as of the barons bold and "aged judge," who were then the pride and ornament of Kyle, found there a fitting place. It has been objected that the mantle of Coila, like the shield of Achilles and the cup of Thyrsis, is too crowded, and contains incongruous images; but the patriotism of the bard rendered him heedless of the rules of art, and Coila's mantle will ever please the admirer of native, genuine, resistless inspiration.

"All hail! my own inspired bard," is the greeting of Coila to the toil-worn peasant, sitting pensively by the "ingle-check." And after telling him that she marked him for her own at his natal hour, she proceeds:—

"With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely-caroled, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fired at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the north his fleecy store
Drove through the sky,
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherish'd every floweret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In every grove,
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering, shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adorèd Name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Mised by Fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray,
Was light from Heaven.

"I taught thy manners-painting strains,
 The loves, the wants of simple swains,
 Till now, o'er all my wide domains,
 Thy fame extends ;
 And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
 Become thy friends.

"Then never murmur nor repine ;
 Strive in thy humble sphere to shine ;
 And, trust me, not Potosi's mine,
 Nor king's regard,
 Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
 A rustic bard.

"And wear thou this, she solemn said,
 And bound the holly round my head :
 The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
 Did rustling play ;
 And, like a passing thought, she fled
 In light away."

There is nothing in universal poetry truer, more modest, or more affecting than the presentment here given of Coila's consecration of her native minstrel in the spence of Mossgiel.

The opening stanzas of a poem of this period, *A Winter's Night*, have secured the admiration of all critics for picturesque truthfulness of description. The man who penned them had had his eyes open, actually *saw* what he attempted to describe :—

"When biting Boreas, fell and dour ;
 Sharp shivers through the leafless bower ;
 When Phœbus gies a short-lived glower
 Far south the lift,
 Dim-darkening through the flaky shower,
 Or whirling drift :

"Ae night the storm the steeples rock'd,
 Poor Labour sweet in sleep was lock'd,
 While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-choked,
 Wild eddying swirl,
 Or, through the mining outlet bock'd,
 Down headlong hurl."

And then follow two verses of inimitable tenderness, evi-

dencing the same strong love for every creature—for everything living, or poetically capable of being gifted with life—that we previously saw in his addresses to the *Mouse* and the *Daisy* :—

“ Listening, the doors and winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O’ winter war.
And through the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle
Beneath a scaur.
“ Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o’ spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o’ thee?
Where wilt thou cower thy chittering wing,
And close thy e’e?”

Scotch Drink, The Author’s Earnest Cry and Prayer, The Auld Farmer’s New-year Morning Salutation to his Auld Mare Maggie—a delightful little poem—*The Twa Dogs; a Tale*—composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken—*The Ordination*, and an *Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous*,* are the principal productions, in addition to those already mentioned, which were produced at Mossgiel during this most productive winter, and form the staple of the unpretending volume soon to be issued from the Kilmarnock Press.

We have already seen that Burns, with constitutional ardour, had been wooing the “Mauchline belle,” Jean Armour; and it soon became manifest that Jean had “loved not wisely, but too well.” To mitigate scandal and make such immediate reparation as was possible, Burns gave the unfortunate partner of his indiscretion a written acknowledgment of a private marriage, which in Scotland entitles the holder to all the legal privileges of a wife. But, as the poet’s circumstances were known to be straitened, and his character suspected, Armour’s father compelled her to surrender the paper,

* This poem, however, was first published in the second or Edinburgh edition.

in order to render the marriage null, though, according to the best authorities, the marriage was valid in spite of such surrender. Burns offered to proceed to Jamaica, in hopes of bettering his fortunes, and then return to claim his wife—nay, he even proposed to become a day-labourer at home to support Jean and her expected offspring—but old Armour was implacable; and Jean, naturally of feeble resolution, yielded to paternal threats. The poet's affections, as well as his self-love, were wounded, and he regarded his mistress's conduct with the deepest resentment. He accordingly determined to leave his native country, and engaged to go to Jamaica as bookkeeper on the estate of a Dr Douglas. To raise the sum necessary for his outfit and passage, he, at the instance of Gavin Hamilton, agreed to publish his poems by subscription, and proposals were therefore immediately issued. Hamilton's advice was tendered to willing ears, for we have seen from the suggestions of Richard Brown, and of his brother Gilbert, together with his own hankerings thereafter, that the idea of publication had become almost fixed already.

The treatment of the Armours revealed to him that his passion for Jean was stronger than he himself knew. He thus alludes to the unfortunate affair in his *Lament* :—

“Oh! can she bear so base a heart,
 So lost to honour, lost to truth,
 As from the fondest lover part,
 The plighted husband of her youth!
 Alas! life's path may be unsmooth!
 Her way may lie through rough distress!
 Then who her pangs and pains will soothe,
 Her sorrows share, and make them less?

“Oh! scenes in strong remembrance set!
 Scenes never, never to return!
 Scenes, if in stupor I forget,
 Again I feel, again I burn!
 From every joy and pleasure torn,
 Life's weary vale I'll wander through;
 And hopeless, comfortless, I'll mourn
 A faithless woman's broken vow.”

In his letter to Dr Moore he says :—"This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart and mistaken the reckoning of rationality. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother—in truth, it was only nominally mine—and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. But before leaving my native country for ever, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as was in my power. I thought they had merit ; . . . but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public ; and besides, I pocketed, all expenses deducted, nearly twenty pounds. This sum came very seasonably, as I was thinking of indenting myself, for want of money to procure my passage. As soon as I was master of nine guineas—the price of wafting me to the torrid zone—I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde ; for

'Hungry ruin had me in the wind.'

"I had been for some days skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail ; as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my friends ; my chest was on the road to Greenock ; I had composed the last song I should ever measure in Caledonia—*The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast*—when a letter from Dr Blacklock to a friend of mine overthrew all my schemes, by opening new prospects to my poetic ambition. The doctor belonged to a set of critics for whose applause I had not dared to hope. His opinion, that I would meet with encouragement in Edinburgh for a second edition, fired me so much, that away I posted for that city

without a single acquaintance, or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influence in my zenith, for once made a revolution to the nadir; and a kind Providence placed me under the patronage of one of the noblest of men—the Earl of Glencairn. *Oublie moi, Grand Dieu, si jamais je l'oublie.*

“I need relate no further. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to *catch* the characters and *the manners living as they rise*. Whether I have profited time will show.”

His wretchedness at this crisis was extreme. He saw himself divorced from the object of his warmest love, for his poverty; and his pride rose in arms. He renewed an intimacy he had formed with Mary Campbell, his famous “Highland Mary;” and it was agreed that they should shortly be married. Before going home to the Highlands to make arrangements for her union with the poet, the lovers had a romantic parting one Sunday in May on the beautiful banks of the Ayr. Mr Cromek says—“Their adieu was performed with all those simple and striking ceremonials which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions and to impose awe. The lovers stood on each side of a small purling brook,” (most probably the Faile,) “they laved their hands in the limpid stream—and, holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other.” The lovers exchanged Bibles. That presented by Burns to Mary is now in the monument at Alloway. It is in two volumes. In a blank leaf of the one is inscribed in the handwriting of the bard, “And ye shall not swear by My name falsely. I am the Lord,” (Levit. xix. 12.) On the second volume, “Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths,” (Matt. v. 33.) So keenly does he seem to have felt the faithlessness of Jean that he fences his betrothal to Mary with the most awful sanctions of religion. The lovers never met more, poor Mary having died of fever

at Greenock. But her sweet image was faithfully mirrored on the heart of Burns, and few can read unmoved his affecting verses, *To Mary in Heaven*, written many years after. Mr William Douglas, engraver, Edinburgh, in a paper read before the Society of Scottish Antiquaries, proved beyond a doubt that Burns's attachment to Mary was but an episode in the affair of Armour, a thing never before suspected. But it is quite in consonance with all that we know of Burns's impulsive character. His indignation against Armour was at first furious: "Against two things," he writes at this period, "I am fixed as fate—staying at home, and owning her conjugally. The first, by heaven, I will not do! the last, by hell, I will never do!"

The proposals for publishing, which had been circulated among his friends, were so favourably entertained that the printing of the poems was finally resolved upon. John Wilson, a Kilmarnock bookseller, the "Wee Johnny" of a not very happy epigram, was the printer. During the latter part of June and the whole of July 1786, the now world-famous poems were going through an obscure provincial press. He was still fixed in purpose to proceed to the West Indies, though he now wrote of the matter no longer in the high-tragic, but rather in the comic, vein:—

"Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
And hap him in a cozie biel;
Ye'll find him aye a dainty chiel,
And fou o' glee;
He wadna wrang'd the very deil,
That's owre the sea."

In a more serious mood, however, is the *Farewell to the Brethren of St James's Lodge, Torbolton*:—

"Adieu! a heart-warm, fond adieu!
Dear brothers of the *mystic tie*!
Ye favour'd, ye enlighten'd few,
Companions of my social joy;
Though I to foreign lands must hie,
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba',
With melting heart, and brimful eye.
I'll mind you still, though far awa'!"

In anticipation of his leaving the country it was rumoured that old Armour was preparing to take legal measures to procure caution from the poet for the maintenance of his expected offspring. Burns, either unable to procure the caution required—some five pounds a year—or deeming himself, from the shabby treatment he had experienced from Jean's father, morally released from all claims of support, removed quietly to the house of a relative, near Kilmarnock, taking with him his chest and what was necessary for his outfit for Jamaica. He was thus nearer the press; and it is by no means unlikely that he kept a sharp outlook for the blood-hounds of the law, as incarceration would be the inevitable result of any *diligence* taken by Armour against the recalcitrant poet. A jail had unusual terrors for him, as we see now, from his letter to Dr Moore, and as we shall see in the sequel, immediately before his death. With his poetic instincts, and out-door habits, a prison were to him, as a cage to a singing bird, as confinement to "the commoners of air." It was amid circumstances so untoward that, in the end of July this year, appeared the wondrous volume, entitled "Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Robert Burns," with a manly touching preface, in which the poet modestly asserted his own consciousness of the poetic gift. The impression was of six hundred copies; and so great was the demand for it that within two months a second edition of one thousand copies was under discussion. After paying all expenses, about twenty pounds remained to the bard—a mere pittance as literary work is now remunerated, and recalling vividly the ten pounds paid to Milton for the first edition of *Paradise Lost*—but perfectly satisfactory as a pecuniary result to the poet himself. The ear of the world was taken as it were by storm. A great original genius was once more vouchsafed to Scotland; and the harp erst touched so skilfully by our Royal James and by Dunbar the "Mackar," was again in hands equally potent. "Old and young," says Heron, "high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant,

were alike delighted, agitated, transported. I was at that time resident in Galloway, contiguous to Ayrshire, and I can well remember how even ploughboys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned the most hardly, and with which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might but procure the works of Burns." Persons of high social and literary rank became interested in him. Professor Dugald Stewart, whose summer residence was then at Catrine, Dr Hugh Blair on a visit to Stewart, and Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, were all amazed at the prodigality of genius exhibited in the humble volume, and took a lively interest in the history and success of the rustic minstrel.

The Rev. George Lawrie, minister of the parish of Loudon, a man of high culture and character, and on terms of intimacy with the leading Scottish literati, had been much struck with the poems. The author appeared to him a man of too high mark to be allowed to pine in provincial obscurity, or to expatriate himself to a pestilential climate to fulfil the duties of an ignoble occupation. He brought Burns and his book under the notice of Dr Blacklock of Edinburgh, that he might do what he could for both with the literary magnates of the capital. Meanwhile Burns, whose fame was ringing "from Maidenkirk to John o' Groats," was perhaps the most exquisitely miserable individual in the realm; and it was while passing over a bleak moor between Loudon Manse and Mossgiel in a windy autumn evening, clouds driving across the sky, and "cold pelting showers at intervals adding discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind," that he composed *The Gloomy Night is Gathering Fast*, the last song he should ever measure in Caledonia:—

"Farewell, old Coila's hills and dales,
Her heathy moors and winding vales;
The scenes where wretched fancy roves,
Pursuing past, unhappy loves!
Farewell, my friends! farewell, my foes!
My peace with these, my love with those—
The bursting tears my heart declare;
Farewell, the bonnie banks of Ayr!"

To Lawrie's letter Blacklock returned a most enthusiastic reply, and suggested that a second edition, more numerous than the former, should be immediately printed. This letter was at once placed in the hands of Burns, and praise so high from so influential a quarter opened new prospects to his poetic ambition. He did not, however, as is generally supposed, and as one might be apt to imagine from his own letters, immediately adopt the resolution of proceeding to Edinburgh. The West Indian scheme was still uppermost, and but for the accidental delay of the vessel in which he had taken out his passage, he would probably have been on his way "owre the sea" ere the prospect of success in the capital had opened on his view. Professor Stewart, at whose house of Catrine Burns had dined in company with Basil, Lord Daer, thus describes the impression produced on him by the poet at this period of his history:—"His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent, strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him, and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting, but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing perhaps was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language when he spoke in company, more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided, more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology." But in other, and to Burns more genial, company, he sought to drown care; and among the Gavin Hamiltons,

and Tam Samsons, and other local worthies, it was his pride and his solace to set the table in a roar. Indeed, it was only over the social bowl, or in the act of composing, with the inspiring mantle of the Muse upon him, that he could for a moment forget the sad conditions of his lot.

He at last resolved to try his fortune in Edinburgh, impelled thereto by Blacklock's letter, and by Mr Ballantyne of Ayr, who represented to him that that city was the fittest place for bringing out a second edition with success. He reached the capital on the 28th of November; and being introduced by Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield to the Earl of Glencairn, that nobleman induced Creech, then the leading Edinburgh publisher, and who had in early life been his tutor, to undertake the proposed republication, and got the Caledonian Hunt, one and all, to subscribe for copies at a guinea each. Besides, Mr Mackenzie wrote a highly eulogistic and genial critique of the Kilmarnock edition in the *Lounger*; and this recognition of his genius by the greatest living authority in Scotland at once established and confirmed his reputation among all classes of his countrymen. He found himself at once the lion of the season. The Duchess of Gordon, the witty Harry Erskine, Lord Monboddo, Dr Robertson, Dr Blair, Dr Gregory, Dr Adam Ferguson, Mr Mackenzie, and Mr Fraser Tytler, adopted him into their society, and were more captivated by the vigour of his understanding, and the force and brilliancy of his conversation, than they had been even by his wondrous poems. Taken from the plough-tail into the most distinguished society in Edinburgh, into a circle more brilliant and renowned than any that has since graced our ancient capital, and which could not have been surpassed for all that really dignifies humanity in any capital in Europe, the Ayrshire peasant never for a moment lost his head; but, with the witching cup of flattery in his hand, remained unintoxicated; weighed calmly his true position and relation to the magnates of literature, fashion, and rank with whom he was thus strangely

brought into contact ; foresaw that the popular breeze would soon swell other sails ; and meditated an early retreat to the humble scenes and occupations he had so glorified in immortal verse. No taint of awkwardness, servility, *mauvaise honte*, or presumption, infected his intercourse with men whose fame was in all mouths, and into whose society not many months before he could never have anticipated an introduction. The only noticeable trace of rustic breeding was a hardness and decisiveness in delivering his opinions, which made it unpleasant for any one to differ with him, owing partly to his being accustomed to give law in his own circle at home, but perhaps more to his determination to bate no jot of self-respect, and to assert the dignity of manhood wherever he was one of two or three met together.

The new edition appeared on the 21st of April. There were fifteen hundred subscribers, engaging for two thousand eight hundred copies. *Death and Dr Hornbook*, *The Ordination*, and the *Address to the Unco Guid*, though written some considerable time before, were now first published. The *Brigs of Ayr*, *Tam Samson's Elegy*, and the *Address to Edinburgh*, were the principal new poems which appeared. A few juvenile pieces of no great moment were also added, and the volume was dedicated to "The Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt." The dedication is extremely characteristic. It breathes a noble spirit of independence, but is couched in language which the severer taste of the present day would pronounce somewhat inflated. To Mrs Dunlop he had written that he would clear between two and three hundred pounds by Creech's edition. The sum actually cleared must have been about six hundred pounds ; so that, on the whole, it is incorrect to charge the Scottish people of that day with stinginess to Burns, as he was patronised and paid more liberally than any Scottish author had ever been before, by his own countrymen at least.

The true source of complaint is, not that the metropolitan aristocracy did not give him money enough, but that they

first fêted and then deserted him for some new minister of excitement; that they treated him not as a man but as a thing, as a prodigy, a *lusus naturæ* to be gazed at with vulgar wonder and flung away when curiosity had been sated. He foresaw this, and prepared himself for it, who shall say with how much chagrin and bitterness of heart? For if ever there lived a man who yearned for the loving sympathies of his fellows, and of the most exalted of his fellows, it was Burns. His own heart was so noble, his own instincts so generous, his own sympathies so comprehensive, that neglect hurt him in a manner inconceivable to coarser natures, and “froze the genial current of his soul.” And this he felt all the more that he was himself one of the sincerest of men; that in his life as in his poetry there was no affectation or cant; that his loves and friendships and joys were real, and his miseries “no idly feigned poetic pains.”

This perfect truthfulness and healthfulness of soul, as has been remarked by a keen observer, is nowhere more strikingly exhibited than in his choice of subjects for his poems. He does not select the distant, the imposing, the great. What lies at his feet, what comes daily under his eye, the joys and sorrows, loves and fears and hopes of quite unheroic personages—farm-labourers and nut-brown maidens of the byre and hay-field and corn-rig—the kyè rowting in the loan, the wounded hare, the owrie cattle, the “muirs and mosses many” of his own Scotia, and her loan glens of green bracken, more lovely and beloved than bowers of sweet myrtle, are to him the subjects of finest inspiration. He is everywhere and in everything natural. Strength and gracefulness and perfect mastery of his subject peculiarly characterise him. He is perhaps the most graphic of poets. His descriptions bring the very scenes before our eyes, for his own vision was clear, and often a single happy epithet makes as it were “a sunshine in a shady place.” Withal he is as emphatic as he is vivid. There is nothing weak or garrulous in him. The vigour of his intellectual conceptions is as marked as the

more peculiar gifts of the muse. Hence he was no mere poet. In any walk of life, in any department of literature, steady effort would have borne him to the van. He had a fine though uncultivated gift of speculation ; and whoever deems that he was a mere moonstruck, melodious singer, unfitted for the ways and works of men, has yet to read his character. For he was full of practical sagacity ; not to be duped by any ; saw through character at a glance ; and, could he have *willed* it strongly, might have commanded any position that he aimed at. But herein lay his weakness. To *will* strongly, he had never learned. Whether his passions led him astray with light NOT from heaven ; whether hereditary hypochondria had embittered the springs of life, and made world's gear and worldly distinction appear not worth contending for ; or the too great strain on his youthful energies necessitated by the unpropitious fortunes of his father had somehow depressed his vital powers, it is needless to inquire. And yet, strong and practical as was his intellect, the finer attributes of the poetic temperament had been largely given to him. In tenderness and playful pathos he is unsurpassed. Humour, especially that species of it characteristic of his countrymen, he possessed in rich abundance. But what intellectual stature, what degree of poetic development, he might have attained under happier circumstances and a longer life, though we may conjecture, we can never know. That he has nevertheless left his impress so strongly marked on his country's thought and speech, makes it the more apparent how great he was, and the more to be regretted that his sun went down ere it had reached its meridian.

A character of such commingled strength and weakness would feel keenly and resent fiercely the neglect of *society* after its first outbreak of vulgar wonder had been sated. And it was well known that he was, in circles less select, wont to set the table in a roar with sarcasms aimed at the social leaders of the capital. Hence, though his conversation had carried a duchess off her feet, and been the more than

nine days' wonder of the season, he began to experience cold looks and distant recognitions from those who before had been boisterous in their welcome and admiration. He had anticipated this; but still it may have so irritated him that a too frequent resort to looser companions, who at least thought they borrowed honour from the Ayrshire bard, and with whom he could take his ease in his inn, may have been the consequence.

It had always been a favourite idea with him to take leisurely pilgrimages over Scotland, visiting scenes famous in history and tradition, and notable as the localities of national song. Accordingly, after the labours of the press were over, and he had the command of, to him, a considerable sum of money, he left Edinburgh on Saturday the 5th of May 1787, in company with Mr Robert Ainslie, a young gentleman of Berwickshire, then serving his apprenticeship as a writer to the signet, to visit the scenery of the Southern Border, so famous in the ditties of the old minstrels whose mantles had fallen upon himself. His intention was to return by Dumfries, to inspect the farms on the estate of Dalswinton, belonging to Mr Patrick Miller, one of the earliest and kindest of his Edinburgh patrons, who, Burns's resolution of returning to his original occupation having been expressed, wished greatly to have him for a tenant. Meanwhile Ainslie and the poet pursued their pilgrimage on horseback, Burns bestriding Jenny Geddes, named after the virago who hurled her stool at the head of the Dean of Edinburgh, on the 23d of July 1637, when attempting to introduce the *Liturgy* into the service of St Giles, and with whom the poet's mare seems to have had much in common. He kept a journal of this tour, noting not merely what was picturesque in scenery and strange in adventure, but remarking with great sagacity on men and manners, and furnishing the germs of what might be easily manufactured into several "genteel comedies." After visiting most of the famed localities of the Southern Border, with the exception of the "dowie dens" of Yarrow,

which he was forced to stop short of, no doubt much to his disappointment, by bad rainy weather, he crossed over into England, visiting Aluwick, Warkworth, Morpeth, Newcastle, Hexham, Wardrew, Longtown, and Carlisle. From Carlisle, on June 1st, he addressed a letter, in the broadest vernacular of Scotland, to Mr William Nicol of the High School, a man of some ability, but of extreme coarseness and rudeness of manners, and a teacher of extraordinary severity. His name is preserved beyond the possibility of decay in *Willie brew'd a peck o' maut*. In that letter he says: "I'll be in Dumfries the morn gif the beast be to the fore and the branks bide hale." From Dumfries he proceeded to Dalswinton, lingering about a week in the district, admiring the beautiful scenery of the Nith, but dubious of risking the profits of his muse on fields stony and "out of heart." He arrived in Mauchline on the 9th of June; and when the son who, six months before, had left Mossgiel poor, comparatively obscure, skulking from a jail, with his tenderest affections cruelly lacerated, and his relationship spurned by a village mason, opened the door of Mossgiel homestead and stood unheralded amid his family, his name now the most famous in the land, his genius recognised by the highest tribunals, his social successes ringing "Scotland thorough," great must have been his mother's pride and joy, though all she said was, "O Robert!" and great the pride and joy of the faithful Gilbert and of the rest of the household, though as quietly expressed as their mother's had been.

He immediately called on the Armours, ostensibly to see his daughter. Jean had, in the previous September, given birth to twins, and it was arranged that one of them, a boy, should be brought up at Mossgiel, and the other, a girl, by the Armours. He found the Armours only too well pleased to see him, and their servility stirred his bile, and provoked his misanthropy. His prospects were uncertain, farming he was afraid to risk, and he still entertained the idea, as a last resource, of trying Jamaica. He seems, from a letter of this

period to Nicol, to have had an access of melancholy, dismal forebodings of the future, a distrust of fortune, a suspicion that the great had been using him as a mere passing instrument of excitement, and a consequent rising of his soul in arms against mankind. That one who had been on a sudden raised so high from an estate so low should fall foul of Fortune in terms apparently so unjustifiable, has excited surprise and censure; but having lived for a season "too much in the sun," nothing else could have been expected from one so tremulously sensitive when he found himself once more in his humble home, and at a distance from the excitement, and, may it be said? from the flattery, refined or more gross, seldom unacceptable, if given in sincerity and truth, to the poetic temperament. At all events he could not as yet settle down quietly to his ordinary pursuits, and it seems that he started from Mauchline on a Highland tour, of which the particulars are not very fully known. Jenny Geddes was again his travelling companion. We find him at Inverary, where he composed a very unjust and injudicious epigram affecting the Duke of Argyle; next dancing at a Highland gentleman's hospitable mansion till three in the morning; thereafter plying the punch-bowl till six; and then spending the day on Loch Lomond, dining at Dumbarton, and running a mad race on Jenny Geddes, with a breeless Highlandman on a good horse, all the performers, horses and men, coming of course to grief.

He spent the month of July at Mossgiel. His fame procured him many friendships, and his society was much courted. Dugald Stewart met him twice—once in his own house at Catrine, where Burns was his guest, and again at a masonic lodge at Mauchline. From what fell under Stewart's observation now, despite the whispers that were busy with Burns's good name, he "should have concluded in favour of his habits of sobriety." It was also now that Burns wrote from Mossgiel that most interesting autobiographical letter to Dr Moore, so characteristic of him, and to which we have so often referred.

That he might have a final settlement with Creech, he returned to Edinburgh, arriving there on the 7th of August. He had also arranged to start on a Highland tour with Nicol of the High School, a man with many good qualities, yet withal so irascible that Burns compared himself "with such a *compagnon de voyage* to a man travelling with a loaded blunderbuss at full cock!" They left Edinburgh on Saturday, 25th of August 1787, and, as during the previous tour on the Border, Burns kept a diary. The travellers went by Linlithgow, Falkirk, Stirling, taking Carron Ironworks and Bannockburn by the way. Burns's feelings on the field of Bannockburn were wrought up to a high pitch of patriotism. He turned aside to visit Harvieston, in the valley of the Devon, where some relatives of Gavin Hamilton resided. Along with these he visited Caudron Linn, Rumbling Brig, and Deil's Mill. Nicol and the poet made good use of their time, and we soon find them at Dunkeld. Next day they hear Niel Gow play, and afterwards sup with the Duchess of Athole at Blair, where Josiah, afterwards Professor Walker, previously known to Burns, was residing in the capacity of tutor. Walker furnished Dr Currie with a very interesting account of the visit. It appears the ducal circle was enchanted with Burns's conversation. He seemed to apprehend at once his proper relation to his hosts, and charmed them much by drinking to the fine young family as "honest men and bonnie lasses." Nicol's waywardness prevented the poet from prolonging his stay, which was unfortunate in this respect, that Mr Dundas, afterwards Viscount Melville, the great dispenser of Scottish patronage, was daily expected on a visit. As it was, however, he was fortunate in procuring the acquaintanceship of Mr Graham of Fintray, who eventually proved a valuable friend. To mark his sense of the kindness of his noble entertainers, he transmitted from Inverness, in a letter to Walker, "The humble petition of Bruar Water to the noble Duke of Athole." From Blair they went up to Garry, crossed the Spey, visiting as they

proceeded the places of most remarkable interest, such as Castle Cawdor, "where Macbeth murdered King Duncan," Culloden Moor, Elgin Cathedral, and Gordon Castle, where Burns, calling by himself, was invited to dinner by his old acquaintance the Duchess. As Nicol, however, had not accompanied the poet, he rose to depart as soon as decency permitted, informing his hosts of his fellow-traveller's being in the village. Nicol was invited to the castle; but his blood was up at the fancied slight he had received, and Burns found himself under the necessity of immediately proceeding with the angry dominie, or of separating from him altogether, a thing not in consonance with his generous nature. To mark his sense of the kindness he had received, he composed a little poem, beginning, "Streams that glide in orient plains." He visited his paternal relations at Stonehaven and Montrose, and arrived again in Edinburgh on the 16th of September, having travelled 600 miles in twenty-two days.

He had intended to be at Dalswinton again in August, but had not been able to keep his appointment. Meanwhile he not only entered heart and soul into the task of aiding Johnson in getting up his Musical Museum, but endeavoured to enlist poets and musicians as fellow-workers with him—song-writers, like Skinner, author of *Tullochgorum*, and, *per ambages*, the noble author of *Cald Kail in Aberdeen*. He again set out on a ten-days' tour. He visited his old friends at Harvieston, Sir William Murray of Ochtertyre, and Mr Ramsay of Ochtertyre, (a different place near Stirling,) a gentleman well qualified, from somewhat of kindred genius, to sympathise with his guest, and, from his knowledge of the world, to give him judicious counsel, both as a poet and a man. His companion on this tour was a Dr Adair. He returned to Edinburgh on the 20th of October, ill with a cold contracted on his journey. He was detained in the capital apparently against his will, by a desire to obtain a final settlement with Creech, the most dilatory of

mortals in drawing his purse ; but had at last determined to leave it, for a time at least, early in December, when, having been overset by a drunken coachman, he was confined to his lodgings by a bruised knee. Now commenced his intimacy with Mrs M'Lehose, the Clarinda of those tawdry letters, so dear to inexperienced youths and maidens, but so revolting to every mature person of the least taste. He was again in a complication of miseries—hypochondria, remorse for past errors, doubts of Creech's solvency, miseries only transiently relieved by Sylvander's tragic raptures for Clarinda. To crown all, Jean was once more soon to be a mother "yet nae wife," and her father had turned her out of doors, so that the poet, confined with his bruised limb, had to write to a friend to procure shelter for the hapless partner of his indiscretion. His ideas now fixed themselves on the Excise as a means of sustaining life. He gave in an application, was examined by a supervisor, and applied to Graham of Fintray and the Earl of Glencairn to forward his views. His mathematical training at Kirkoswald both suggested and qualified him for his new occupation.

While thus confined by his bruised limb, the second volume of Johnson's *Museum* was published, owing almost all its attractiveness both of poetry or music to Burns's personal exertions. He left Edinburgh on Monday the 18th of February, proceeding by Glasgow, Paisley, and Kilmarnock to Mossiel. On the 25th he went to Dalswinton, taking with him a sagacious practical farmer, to aid him in coming to some definite resolution as to whether he should be a tenant of Mr Miller, and if so, as to what farm he should select. From Cumnock he wrote hopefully to Clarinda about the farming project. This was on the 2d of March, and on the 5th Clarinda alludes in a letter to the approaching accouchement of Jean, and expresses sincere pity for that hapless young woman. Burns thought that Jean had no legal claims on him as a husband ; and it is well known that Clarinda, in the fierce energy of her passion, wished him to bind himself

to none in marriage, in the hope that circumstances might arise to allow of her own union with him. It appears, therefore, that Sylvander, Burns's Arcadian sobriquet in his correspondence with Mrs M'Lehose, as well as that passionate-hearted, ill-starred woman herself, would have hesitated little to throw poor Armour over altogether, the poet however taking care that Jean and her expected offspring should experience from his humanity that support and shelter which they might have looked for in vain from his shattered love. Meanwhile Burns procured temporary shelter for her in Torbolton, and afterwards had her removed to Mauchline. He so far reconciled the Armours to their erring daughter, that Mrs Armour attended Jean in her confinement. Again she presented "Rob Mossgiel" with twins, both daughters, who died a few days after their birth.

On the 13th of March he concluded a bargain with Mr Miller for the farm of Ellisland, on the banks of the Nith, between five and six miles above Dumfries. He had the choice of three farms, of which he chose the worst, because it was the most romantically situated. It was stony and impoverished, but it must be confessed that the landlord gave him an easy bargain. He had also a few days before accomplished two objects of importance to him—he had got a settlement with Creech, and had obtained an order from the Board of Excise for his instructions in the technicalities of the profession. These were to be imparted to him by an officer at Torbolton, and it was desirable that they should be completed before the 25th of May, when he was to enter on his lease of Ellisland. He would have at this time about £400 in his pocket, and of this he advanced £180 to his brother Gilbert, to enable him to struggle on with the cold soil of Mossgiel, and keep the family together in something like comfort.

In a letter to James Smith, Avon Printfield, Linlithgow dated April 28, 1788, Burns first acknowledged his intention to make Jean "an honest woman." He had always had a

warm affection for her, chilled naturally for a time by her own and her parents' conduct towards him ; but cast as she now was upon his protection, his love was rekindled, being strongly fanned by his natural tenderness of heart.

He took up his residence at Ellisland on the 13th of June. He had to get a new *steading* built, and Jean and her child, one of the first twins, had to remain at Mauchline. To Mrs Dunlop he acknowledged his marriage, and his satisfaction with his choice. That he had done her justice reconciled himself to his better instincts. Providing a home by the banks of the Nith for the loved one not far from the banks of the Ayr, his conscience became calm, and his affections took eager flight to the quondam "Mauchline belle." It was while animated by these feelings that he composed his famous song, *Of a' the airts the wind can blaw*, and the warm and luxuriant stanzas beginning, *Oh, were I on Parnassus hill!*

On the 5th of August, Robert Burns and Jean Armour were formally declared husband and wife by the church. His new house not being ready so early as he had expected, he brought Mrs Burns to Dumfriesshire in the first week of December, having obtained temporary accommodation for her at a neighbouring farm. United to his wife and family, surrounded by a household-train, however humble, his feelings welled over in song, *I hae a wife o' my ain*, &c.

It was not long, however, before he had reason to despair of succeeding as the farmer of Ellisland, and he took measures to obtain an appointment as an exciseman in his own district.

He disclosed his views to Dr Moore, and in the midst of his despondency a flash of hope, characteristically enough, cheers him on ; for, while hinting that an excise officer's position would be acceptable, he sees a supervisorship or surveyor-generalship looming in the future.

Ellisland was a pleasant spot, and in the neighbourhood were some very worthy men who cultivated the acquaintance

of Burns. Among others, Captain Riddel of Glenriddel, and Mr M'Murdo, chamberlain to the Duke of Queensberry, and residing in Drumlanrig Castle. He would have been very happy here had fortune been more propitious. He exerted himself, in conjunction with Captain Riddel, to establish a parish library, perhaps among the first of such in Scotland. His feelings towards Creech had undergone a change, and he now corresponded with him in friendly terms, and supplied him, gratis, with copies of his more recent productions for a contemplated new edition. Ecclesiastical disputes still raging in the west, he wrote *The Kirk's Alarm*, in behalf of Dr M'Gill of Ayr, whom he looked on as an injured honest man ; but M'Gill having given in a document expressive of his regret for having disturbed the peace of the church, the storm of persecution was allayed.

Mrs Burns, now residing in the new house at Ellisland, having given birth to a son on the 18th of August 1789, the poet, anticipating increased household expenditure, applied to Graham of Fintray to be appointed excise officer of the district in which he lived. Ellisland was to be converted into a dairy farm, managed principally by the females of the establishment, thus giving the poet time for attending to official duties.

Two bacchanalian productions of the highest merit, *Willie brewed a peck o' maut*, and *The Whistle*, were now written. It has been strenuously asserted that Burns was not present at the famous contest for the whistle ; but it has been clearly established that he was, nor can any candid man, all circumstances considered, attach to him the slightest blame. He was as sober as a lark when the contest closed. Though now happy, most happy with his Jean, the vision of Mary Campbell sometimes floated before his mental vision, and at the close of an autumn day, three years after poor Mary's untimely death, he composed the verses, *To Mary in Heaven*. He was appointed to the Excise, but his district comprehended ten parishes, and neither his farming operations nor

his poetic studies could prosper well with a man who had to ride on an average two hundred miles a week. He was, however, zealous and conscientious in the discharge of his official duties, and his over-exertions laid him on a sick bed. His diligence gratified his superiors to such a degree, that, when he had been only a twelvemonth in the service, his promotion to a supervisorship, it might have been of £200 a year, was contemplated. Old friends sometimes looked in on him, as Mr Ramsay of Ochtertyre and Robert Ainslie. Such days were to be marked by a white stone. In one day, at Ellisland, he composed what he himself deemed the best of his poems, *Tam o' Shanter*, for Captain Grose's *Antiquities of Scotland*. He wished Alloway Kirk to be delineated in that work, and Grose agreed to do so if the *ingenious* Mr Robert Burns should write for it a "pretty tale."

Burns was now falling into straitened circumstances. Ellisland was eating up the profits of his muse. Yet it never occurred to him to rhyme for anything but "fun." In spring 1791 he had stated to Lady Elizabeth Cunningham that but for the Excise he would have had to give up the farm. Perhaps he was not a very good farmer. Such is the general and perhaps correct impression. He now only waited promotion to throw up the farm altogether. His hopes of a supervisorship were for the present blasted, but he received an appointment to Dumfries, with a salary of £70, which was £20 more than he had at Ellisland, and, besides, he was not required to keep a horse. Accordingly he left Ellisland, and quitting the freedom of the country for the smoky town, he settled down in a small house in the southern capital of Scotland, in the winter of 1791.

It is generally agreed that after settling in Dumfries his moral course was downward rather than otherwise; and if fame had been busy with his character before she had fairer scope now. Let it be owned once for all that there is some truth in this; at the same time, many of the tales circulated to his hurt were either lies or greatly exaggerated; nay, if

carefully examined in the light of coexisting circumstances, in nowise discreditable to him. He was a man of too much mark to escape from the consequences of even the appearance of evil at the hands of those who lay in wait for his halting. Your ordinary blockhead is of all men the dullest and most malignant; and a fellow-feeling of common danger leagued the dull into one against such a dissector of men's minds and motives, such a master of withering sarcasm and crucifying impromptu. Dumfries, like most Scottish towns of similar size and character even now, still more seventy-five years ago, contained a goodly proportion of men of comparatively easy circumstances, who scarcely knew how to fill up the entire day. Their meridian, or twelve-hours' dram, their four o'clock dram, and a tumbler or two of toddy in the evening in their favourite *howff*, was a regular part of the business, at least of the routine, of every day. These men seldom got highly intoxicated, as may be understood from this having been a daily practice, and from their having been generally men in fair businesses. They were soakers, tipplers, their breath never free from the smell of whisky, fresh or stale, but drunkards they were not. Again, there were young doctors, lawyers, writers' clerks, who could not so indulge during the day, but who preferred something more sprightly in their evening computations. By both these classes a man like Burns, who, however, never indulged in the forenoon, was eagerly welcomed, illustrating their orgies by the splendour of his genius and renown, and bringing in his conversation, whether as sallies of wit, floods of broad merriment, outbursts of indefensible coarseness, or electric flashes of pathos drawing tears from every eye, a wealth of social stimulus that could not be found elsewhere. That he had not indulged much before he came to Dumfries is indisputably established. That a man whose clear income was £7 per annum, as his was at Lochlea and Mossgiel, who clothed himself respectably as became his station, and owed no man anything, could have been a drunkard, nay, could

have been often within the walls of a public-house, is clear on the very face of it. Only on two suppositions could this have been the case. First, that Burns was a loungeur hanging about inn doors at Torbolton or Mauchline, for a chance treat from any farmer or bagman, who might think the drink well earned by the brilliancy of the conversation ; or, second, that he sorned on his rustic compeers. But Burns was a man of the most conscientious industry, and his highness of spirit would not brook to accept of anything from any man without paying his fair share of the lawin'. Auld Nanse Tinnock, the Mauchline hostel wife, who found herself and hostelrie suddenly rendered famous by the *Earnest Cry and Prayer*, stoutly denied, and truthfully, that he had been wont to study politics in *her* house, at least "over a glass of guid auld Scotch drink." And when he tells Lapraik,—

"The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,
An' kirsen him wi' reekin' water ;
Syne we'll sit down an' tak' our whitter,
To cheer our heart,"

—it is well enough known that "the four-gill chap" was in the same category with the delicacies of the feast of Barmecide. How it fared with him in Edinburgh cannot be perfectly known. But charges of habitual or even frequent intoxication were never preferred, though a very considerable amount of free living might be pardoned him, when we consider the elevation to which he was so suddenly raised, the eagerness with which his company was sought after, the comparative idleness in which he found himself after a life of labour so severe, that he himself says it was "the unceasing moil of a galley-slave," a style of living that might be called in comparison luxurious, and a greater abundance of cash than he had ever before possessed. Yet, when about to leave Edinburgh, Dr Blair addressed to him a most friendly and affectionate letter, in which his having stood firm and calm and unseduced amid the dazzling circumstances by which he had been tried is particularly enlarged upon. At

Ellisland we know his life was one of temperance and industry, and that he spoke the literal truth when he said that he had taken down his punch-bowl from its *dusty* corner on some particular occasion of merry-making. At all times he was apt to be intruded on, sometimes by shallow blockheads who were no mates for him, at other times by men of worth and standing, literary and social; and to both classes alike he was apt to give up his time and impair his means by a hearty and abundant hospitality. His was not the calculating head and the chill heart in hours of good-fellowship; in every hand that he clasped he owned the hand of a brother; and often must he have thrown his pearls before those who could not appreciate them, and neglected his true interests to gratify the laudable or vulgar, and therefore impertinent, curiosity of many who, whether fitted to appreciate or not the wondrous being with whom they had been brought into contact, robbed him, and through him posterity, of that which could not in any case so enrich them, as it made him and has made us poor indeed. The country gentry, too, for a season, were urgent for his presence at their tables. And whilst it must have been gratifying both to Burns and them, it was on the whole injurious. For it broke in upon his leisure, tended to produce, if it did not actually produce, dissatisfaction with the humble *ménage* at home, and put him altogether in a false position. He was the earthen pot sailing down the stream among the brazen ones, and sure to come to grief; as the fable of the boys and frogs has it—"What is sport to you is death to us." Had these local magnates exerted themselves, as it is possible they might have done successfully, to have got promotion for him in his humble self-elected calling, and thereby have procured for him an income large enough to have kept his mind at ease with regard to his family, and for himself a prospect of greater leisure for poetical activity, something might be pardoned to their selfishness. If they had taken away much, it could have been said that they had given something, or

had tried to give something, in return. But they threw aside the flower after they had extracted half its sweetness, and went on their way and made no sign.

It is said that when it was plain that farming Ellisland had proved a failure, and from some political sentiments uttered, or misdemeanours or indiscretions acted, in Dumfries, his prospects in the Excise were overclouded, or supposed to be so, his conduct was less circumspect than usual. If such were the case, do we not see similar results every day? Sorrow is proverbially thirsty; and if, from a regard to human frailty, we condone ordinary mortals for losing heart when fortune frowns, how much more ought we to pardon a being so impressionable as a poet, and that poet Burns! But is it true that Burns so demeaned himself in actual or dreaded misfortune? And is it true, and if so, how true, that Burns by his political sins brought himself under the chastisement or reproof of his superiors? To answer this it will be necessary to glance at the state of politics in Great Britain and France at the period under review.

The French Revolution of 1789 did not immediately affect the sentiments and expressions of Burns, so far as can be learned from his writings; but most men of ardent temperament and liberal opinions watched eagerly for the results of an experiment that was to introduce liberty, fraternity, and equality among men. The position of the unfortunate Louis was viewed with alarm by all dynasties, and by the governing classes generally, as something that boded no good to their order. The British Government and its functionaries, high and low, were naturally on the alert to prevent the spread of those dangerous doctrines which had in their eyes proved so fatal to the cause of order. Burns had a half-sentimental Jacobitism, which had already subjected him to suspicion from the indiscreet publicity he had given it in the unfortunate verses written on an inn window at Stirling. At a period of alarm and suspicion, this would readily be remembered; and, from his fame as poet, and his position as a servant

of the Government, his conduct would be narrowly observed. At a moment of public alarm a race of vile informers finds encouragement and reward from the representatives of power; and men, otherwise highminded and honourable, in the panic of the hour become merciless, uncharitable, and intolerant of everything like independent thought and action. The latent Jacobitism of Scotland came to the surface as a sort of half-Jacobinism, merely because it was known to be distasteful to the reigning family. Burns, not only as a quasi-Jacobite, but in common with a large proportion of the most enlightened and thoughtful of his fellow-subjects generally, expressed himself more freely in the way of sympathy with the French patriots, than was discreet in one in his position. Hence many eyes were turned upon him with watchful spite; and the disaffected gauger, if his conduct were out of joint, or his circumstances embarrassed, would find neither generous criticism nor brotherly sympathy. As matters grew more serious in France, the most of those who at first had hailed the Revolution as the inauguration of a millennium of liberty were compelled to withdraw their sympathies, and to cling with increased fondness to the constitutional form of government established here. Dumfries was a Tory town, and political feeling is generally rancorous in direct proportion to its distance from the centre of power. Burns was a Whig; and the chief men who had patronised him in Edinburgh, and the squires whom he mixed with oftenest in Dumfriesshire, as well as his superiors in the Excise there, were of the same political creed. That he was a Whig, and the man of greatest mark in the town, made him particularly obnoxious to the Tory gentlemen, especially as there was a suspicion that he was a turncoat, and had held different opinions before he had "fallen in Whiggish hands." A distich applied to Burns has been preserved by Sir Walter Scott:—

"A Whig, I guess, but Rab's a Tory,
And gies us mony a funny story."

Whether this be true or not, it is certain that for some time Burns was a marked man. In so small a place he could not but know this; and it is not difficult to imagine that a man of such haughtiness of spirit could ill brook the scorn or insolence of any, of whatever rank; and that he would, from the vivacity of his temperament, unconsciously even play into his enemies' hands. His obnoxious political sentiments, and his stubborn pride of character—not formed to conciliate those whom he deemed treating him unworthily—had doubtless a great instrumentality in originating those tales to his discredit, which, like all doubtful stories about the eminent, ever find too ready credence.

The affair of the four carronades sent by him to the French Convention, along with a letter expressive of his sympathy with their exertions in the cause of liberty, has had perhaps in some quarters undue importance attached to it. The Solway Firth, from its proximity to and easiness of access from the Isle of Man, was much frequented by smuggling craft, and, on the Scottish side especially, there dwelt a race of most daring and unscrupulous smugglers. That contraband operations of almost incredible magnitude were here systematised and regularly carried on, is familiar to every reader of "Redgauntlet." On February 27th, 1792, a suspicious-looking craft was discovered in the Firth, and Burns, with others, was set to watch her movements. Next day she stranded, and, it being discovered that her crew were numerous, well armed, and likely not to yield without formidable resistance, two officers were despatched in different directions for troops. On their arrival, Burns, putting himself at their head, entered the water sword in hand, and boarded the ship, when the crew, losing heart, submitted without a struggle. Here, as in all his professional requirements, he exhibited himself a brave and zealous officer. The vessel, with all her stores and arms, was sold at Dumfries; and Burns, purchasing four carronades for £3, sent them, with a letter as above mentioned, to the French Convention.

Mr Chambers, by a careful examination of dates, has shown that when the guns were bought, no such body as the French Convention existed. This, however, matters little ; whether they were sent to the Convention or the Legislative Assembly, it was an extraordinary and uncalled-for act for a British citizen, and a servant of the Government, so far to step out of his way as to send munitions of war to a Government viewed by his own with uneasy, if not exactly with hostile, feelings. The sentiments of the royal family were also known to be unfavourable to the French Government, and its emissary, M. de Perigord, had even then been publicly slighted at a levee by the Queen. The guns and letter were stopped at Dover ; and it must have been regarded as a very eccentric action in an excise officer, personally to address a foreign Government, and furnish it with material aid, which might be used sometime against either Britain or its allies. The whole transaction, however, regard it as we may, was done deliberately, from no hasty impulse, and under no unusual excitement. It was, we think, very indiscreet ; and though not visited with formal censure from his superiors, would not elevate him in their estimation, nor, at a season of political excitement, be otherwise than detrimental to his chances of promotion.

Matters in France were proceeding rapidly to a crisis. The blood spilt in torrents by the fierce democracy, the establishment of a republic, and the dissemination of revolutionary ideas in other countries—particularly the formation in this country of political societies named “Friends of the People”—were viewed by those in power, and by the majority of all classes, as endangering the peace of society. At such a time Burns ought to have been more than usually circumspect, and, looking at contemporary events in the light of his connexion with the Government, to have said or done nothing to embarrass the powers that were, or to draw upon himself misconstruction and obloquy ; yet, such was the strength of his feelings and the vivacity of his tempera-

ment, that he boldly gave utterance to his sympathy with the French, and to his dissatisfaction with the British Government, for its hostile attitude towards the republicans, and its refusal to grant the reforms insisted on by the "Friends of the People," and even by the more cautious Whigs. In ordinary conversation, but above all in animated discussion, he gave vent to his sentiments with a force and fearlessness that made moderate men shrink from him in alarm. Thus, at a private dinner party he refused to drink the health of Pitt, he being meanwhile a servant of Pitt's Government, and proposed instead the health of Washington. Now, apart from the consideration of the claims of these two distinguished men to precedence, it was surely most ill-judged in Burns to demur to pledge the health of Pitt. The great officers of the Crown are accustomed to be toasted at all kinds of meetings, and by men of all political opinions. But it was an unguarded, though doubtless an obstinate, assertion of his sympathies with republicanism. Two other stories of similar tendency may be here mentioned, though they may not have occurred exactly at this time. Entering the Dumfries theatre one night while the National Anthem was being played, the poet, who was somewhat intoxicated, refused to uncover, and called for *Ça ira*. The anecdote is in its essentials confirmed by two independent witnesses. A call was made by the audience for his expulsion, which subsided on his doffing his hat. Such an act seems, to use the phraseology of Calvinism, to savour of "judicial blindness." On another occasion, at an after-dinner drinking-bout, he proposed the toast—"May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause." An officer present, a Captain —, took offence at it, and, as bearing his Majesty's commission—which Burns also did, though he seems to have forgotten it—took exception to it, doubtless less from what was said than from what was implied, and a discreditable brawl ensued, which, according to the usual code of honour in those days, ought to have resulted in a hostile meeting.

Burns, next morning, wrote a very humble letter to his host, explaining and attempting—it must be confessed, unsuccessfully—to defend the obnoxious toast. It was, he said, “a toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to.” This was begging the question. Words, in themselves harmless, become at certain conjunctures “flat blasphemy ;” and none knew this better than Burns. But, in the cases we have mentioned, there can be no doubt that the wine had stolen away, not the wise man’s brains, but his caution, and that, while under its influence, he gave expression to sentiments which he would have carefully repressed while sober—some of which, in a state of sobriety, would never have occurred to him, nay, never would have shaped themselves in his mind as distinct propositions. But the bowl which elevated him for a while into the most enchanting of table companions, gradually gave, as Horace says, “horns to the poor man.” Fluent of discourse, quick of apprehension, fertile in illustration ; argument, sarcasm, joke, pathos—the whole armoury of successful conversational display flooding his ideas in resistless stream—would make him, as the wine flowed, and

“The mirth and fun grew fast and furious,”

occasionally one of the most obstinate and headstrong of men. It is heartrending to read the almost abject letter in which he excuses himself for not having proceeded to fatal arbitrament on account of his wife and children, and pleads with his host to get the story suppressed, as its publication might bring him under the censure of his superiors in the Excise. No doubt, however, can be entertained that these unpleasantnesses all owed their origin to the “Social Bowl.”

Some malicious, or *loyal*, person had brought these or similar proceedings under the notice of the Board of Excise, and Mr Mitchell, the collector, was instructed to inquire into his political conduct, as being a person blamed for disaffection to the Government. Burns was thrown into a state of

great alarm, as may be seen from his letters to Mr Graham and Mrs Dunlop, of December 1792, and the following January. It was even rumoured that he had been dismissed from the Excise, as we learn from his own letter to Mr Erskine of Mar, in which a history of the transaction, and of his defence, as well as an exposition of his political creed, are given *in extenso*. It is clear that the defence would be nearly as unpalatable to the Board as the offence. Burns evidently made more of the matter than the circumstances warranted. He was cautioned to be more circumspect; and as a Government official he ought not to have been surprised at this, but rather that his political delinquencies were treated so leniently. It may be easily imagined that a *mere* gauger would not have been allowed to slip so easily; and that for such neither Mr Graham nor Mr Corbet would have stood his steady friends. That he was told to *act*, and not to *think*, if it ever *was* said, was simply impertinent; and to be *silent* and *obedient*, whatever might be men or measures, though, as Fluellen says, "prave 'ords," must have commended themselves to Burns himself as the only proper course for him so long as he chose to remain a servant of the Government.

This caution preyed on his sensitive mind, and made him fear for promotion in his calling. It is a peculiarity of the meaner class of animals to assail one who has been wounded; and ignoble men seem to consider it a duty to keep down a brother who has fallen. Just in proportion as they worship the rising sun do they heap up their blasphemies against the luminary in his decline. Besides, many worthy God-fearing persons, aware of the freedom of speech, and taught to suspect a corresponding looseness of conduct in our poet, as well as many sensible and respectable Tories who otherwise would have been proud of his intimacy, but were shocked by his political backslidings, kept aloof from him. In a small, gossiping, aristocratic town like Dumfries this was singularly unfortunate for Burns, because no man would suffer more acutely at being *tabooed* in society. He had not that

thorough absorption in his poetical calling that would make him feel poetry to be its own exceeding great reward. He *must* have the sympathies and kind regards of his fellow-men ; and though he might sing—

“ Who does me disdain,
I will scorn them again,”

the averted looks and cold shoulders of his fellow-citizens must have caused him exquisite misery. Mr Lockhart records an anecdote furnished to him by David Macculloch, son of the laird of Ardwall :—“ He was seldom more grieved than when, riding into Dumfries one fine summer’s evening to attend a county ball, he saw Burns walking alone, on the shady side of the principal street of the town, while the opposite side was gay with successive groups of gentlemen and ladies, all drawn together for the festivities of the night, not one of whom appeared willing to recognise him. The horseman dismounted and joined Burns, who, on his proposing to him to cross the street, said, ‘ Nay, nay, my young friend—that’s all over now ; ’ and quoted, after a pause, some verses of Lady Grizzel Baillie’s pathetic ballad,—

‘ His bonnet stood ance fu’ fair on his brow,
His auld ane look’d better than mony ane’s new ;
But now he lets ’t wear ony way it will hing,
And casts himsel’ dowie upon the corn-bing,

‘ Oh were we young, as we ance hae been,
We suld hae been galloping down on yon green,
And linking it ower the lilywhite lea,
And werena my heart light I wad die.’

It was little in Burns’s character to let his feelings on certain subjects escape in this fashion. He, immediately after citing these verses, assumed the sprightliness of his most pleasing manner ; and taking his young friend home with him, entertained him very agreeably till the hour of the ball arrived, with a bowl of his usual potation, and Bonnie Jean’s singing of some verses which he had recently composed.”

We see him here in two very opposite phases of his charac-

ter, which, on other occasions also, alternated with almost inexplicable rapidity, like the tears and smiles of an April morn.

One thing is certain, that in the performance of his official duties he was conscientious and punctual to a degree of jealousy. As an officer his conduct was praiseworthy, and never were his duties performed in any but the most rigid spirit of fidelity. The least appearance of remissness was explained and defended with punctilious warmth. And this tallies with the general *sense* of duty which never forsook him under any circumstances, and which, when his conduct happened to deflect from the exact circle of propriety, filled him with such vehement remorse. His constitutional melancholy, his large social susceptibilities, his sorrows, his somewhat incongruous circumstances, his falling on evil tongues and evil times, made him apt to snatch an hour from reflection, and drown amid the jovialty of the festive board the meaner cares of his ill-assorted life. And yet these cares sprang chiefly from himself. Had he accepted his position in a spirit of faith, and hope, and cheerfulness, talked less of independence, and leant more on himself, cultivating and maturing the spirit of divine harmony with which he had been so largely gifted, his soul might have got into tune, and, instead of his life alternating between paroxysms of wild joy and overmastering gloom, it might have flowed on musically like a "rejoicing stream."

He has drawn two pictures of himself, one in the comic and one in the tragic vein. Both are equally true and earnest, representing the same character under different lights. In the first, we see him sending care to the winds under the influences of good-fellowship; in the other, contemplating his end, and looking back in sorrow and self-accusation on a marred and unsatisfactory life.

"Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair,
Whene'er I forgather wi' sorrow and care;
I gie them a skelp as they 're creepin' along,
Wi' a cog o' guid swats, and an auld Scottish sang.

“ A towmond o’ trouble, should that be my fa’,
 A night o’ guid fellowship sowthers it a’ :
 When at the blythe end of our journey at last,
 Wha the deil ever thinks o’ the road he has past ? ”

In a more serious mood is the following ; a poem which no man of sensibility, as he reviews the sad record of the poet’s life, and thinks with what heart-pangs it must have been conceived and uttered, can read it without the deepest emotion. It pleads more powerfully for Burns than anything we know ; shows how noble he was at the core ; and ought to make many less eager than they seem “ to draw his frailties from their dread abode.”

- “ Is there a whim-inspirèd fool
 Owre fast for thocht, owre hot for rule,
 Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
 Let him draw near,
 And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
 And drap a tear.
- “ Is there a man, whose judgment clear
 Can others teach the course to steer,
 Yet runs himself life’s mad career,
 Wild as the wave ;
 Here pause—and, through the starting tear,
 Survey this grave.
- “ The poor inhabitant below
 Was quick to learn and wise to know,
 And keenly felt the friendly glow,
 And softer flame ;
 But thoughtless follies laid him low,
 And stain’d his name !
- “ Reader, attend—whether thy soul
 Soars fancy’s flights beyond the pole,
 Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
 In low pursuit ;
 Know, prudent, cautious, self-control,
 Is wisdom’s root.”

Alas, that the physician could not cure himself ! It was the want of *prudent, cautious, self-control* that underlay the most of his sufferings and calamities. Infirmary of purpose was the bane of this “ mighty poet in his misery dead.”

Burns was really as little of a Jacobin at heart as he was of a Jacobite. Though he did express sympathy with the patriots, and rejoiced over the capture of the Bastile, yet when France assumed an attitude hostile to Britain, his patriotism was in a glow at once. And his patriotism had been from his earliest years one of the strongest sentiments of his heart, not a sentiment so much as a passion. For Scotland with her old historic, heroic memories, in the first place, and as a poet ; and for the empire, of which she was an integrant part, with its world-wide possessions and interests, in the second place, and as a man and citizen, his heart ever beat with the most generous devotion. It is one thing to discuss political questions and possible reforms, and to regard with interest and admiration the efforts of an enslaved people to shake off the yoke of despotism, or free themselves from the oppression of an insolent aristocracy ; but should that same people, in the intoxication of success, threaten to pollute the soil of a free nation by making a descent on its shores for any purpose whatever, then the soul of every patriot is up in arms, and the feelings which animated Burns when he composed that noble war-song, *Does haughty Gaul invasion threat ?* pervade millions of bosoms, though none but the *one* Tyrtæus of his people could shape them into such an inspiring and defiant war-cry. Burns was one of the battalion of volunteers raised in Dumfries, as others were elsewhere over the United Kingdom, to repel, if need were, any hostile attack of "haughty Gaul." And, though some of the *respectables*, God help them ! objected to the enrolment of the bard, most fortunately without success, he soon became the most popular man in the battalion, and voluntarily became their poet-laureate. As a volunteer he did his duties nobly, in a fine spirit of enthusiasm ; and as the poet-soldier he did more service, as has been universally and ungrudgingly admitted, to the Government of the country, and consequently to the cause of order, than any other inhabitant of the realm, from the prime minister downward. So potent is the genuine

poetic soul when roused by public danger to stir up a spirit of defiance and self-reliance in a whole people.

“Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
 Then let the loons beware, sir;
 There's wooden walls upon our seas,
 And volunteers on shore, sir.
 The Nith shall run to Corsincon,
 And Criffel sink in Solway,
 Ere we permit a foreign foe
 On British ground to rally!

“The wretch that wad a tyrant own,
 And the wretch his true-born brother,
 Who'd set the mob aboon the throne,
 May they be damn'd together!
 Who will not sing 'God save the King,'
 Shall hang as high's the steeple;
 But while we sing 'God save the King,'
 We'll ne'er forget the people.”

His *Poor and Honest Sodger* also rose at once to the highest popularity. All classes sang it with enthusiasm, and there can be little doubt that it added many a brave soldier to the ranks of the British army, by investing with the finest human interest the career of a humble warrior, and lifting the public imagination above the familiar conception of the ranks of the army being recruited chiefly from the lowest and most degraded of the populace, men of desperate character and fortune, in many instances fugitives from the sentence of the law, either recorded or anticipated. And herein surely Burns deserved well of his country, well especially of its Government. That your Saltmarket or Canongate losel will fight well, has been proved on many a bloody field. That the army is the best school he could enter to acquire habits of self-command and order, obedience to lawful authority, and many other minor morals, is nowise difficult to understand and acknowledge. But that he should be brought into contact with steady intelligent men of his own order, who love their profession, and study its details that they may obtain promotion; who set him an example of voluntary sobriety, subordination, pursuit of knowledge, and a faithful observ-

ance of the decencies of life ; and all the better if they are men, as many common soldiers we hope and believe are, of genuine piety,—then not only is his chance of reformation greater, but the credit of the whole service is enhanced, and the character of the soldier is not associated, as in many minds it still is, with whatever is most dissolute and godless. Burns's song produced on the public mind generally, and fortunately on the minds of many young men in town and country of excellent character and good education, and who had been brought up in honest households, an impression that the army was not the last resource of scapegraces, but a field from which by faithful discharge of duty might be reaped honourable independence and possible promotion. *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled* and the *Song of Death* tend to promote patriotism, and a contempt of death in freedom's cause, inspiring the finest martial enthusiasm, admirably adapted to the genius of our people, which is *martial*, not *military*, that prompts with stern resolve to repel aggression or support outraged weakness, but has no thirst for war or its triumphs as such. Its motto is "Defence." With the exception of Dibdin, whose services to the navy by his excellent sailor-songs were acknowledged by a handsome pension, no poet of the time—and to name Dibdin as a poet in the same breath with Burns is "very intolerable and not to be endured"—did anything to keep alive the national spirit. And yet these services were never acknowledged. Burns, it is certain, never looked for acknowledgment, never imagined he had done anything more meritorious than the most prosaic volunteer who appeared on parade, both having done *what they could* ; yet, devoting his rare, his matchless gift of song to the service of his country, had his country's rulers bestowed on him the merest recognition, though it had cost the imperial treasury no single coin, it would have thrilled his generous soul to its centre with grateful delight. Had they given or promised promotion in the Excise, how, from no spirit of flunkeyism, but from the native promptings of the

warmest and least exacting yet most independent heart then beating, would his gratitude have overflowed in gushing melody; and, as he mourned for Glencairn, who had done nothing for him beyond the commonest courtesies of a kindly nature, and getting the members of the Caledonian Hunt to subscribe for guinea copies of his second edition,—as he mourned for him as mother for child, as bridegroom for newly-wedded bride, so the raptures of his heartfelt joy would have been boundless; and many a sad pang would have been spared to him, many a gloomy foreboding warded off, and his later years, instead of showing life to him as a bare heath without bloom, might have presented it as a not unlovely garden. And whatever may be said or thought of his dissipation, this much is clear, that not when skies are bright and seas are calm, but when they are livid with storms and the waves run high, does the poetic temperament resort to the bowl to deaden thought, “and steep the senses in forgetfulness.”

After all, what was the amount of dissipation with which he could be charged? His political heresies, we believe mainly caused it to be noticed, and, of course, to be exaggerated. He was not more addicted to the use of intoxicating liquors than many of the most respectable civic functionaries, and even grave elders of the church. And for him, in respect to this, and, it may be, other indiscretions, a strong palliation may be found in his temperament, and in the temptations to which he, more than others, was exposed. Among these was the frequent seizure and confiscation of rum or other spirits, which fell to the lot of the revenue officers; and a man of the generous and hospitable disposition of our bard would always be too ready, in the after-part of the day, in his own house, to play the host; and thus, from an abuse of one of the finest feelings of our nature, he was wont to expose himself to unnecessary and hurtful indulgence. If other shortcomings can be charged against him, we should remember that they must have been rare, and sorrowed over with an

anguish of repentance almost inconceivable—as the party sinned against was the first to forgive, and during the remainder of her life cherished for his memory the most sincere affection and admiration. And we should not forget that he died when he was comparatively young, when in many men the fever of the blood has not been cooled; and that, when passion had subsided, the remainder of his life might have flowed on in calmness, had he been preserved to the world. Allan Cunningham, than whom no man had a more tender regard for Burns's reputation, has, we think, been guilty of an error in judgment, in insinuating that too close an intimacy existed between him and some of the heroines of his later songs. He should either have been more circumstantial, or been silent altogether. Professor Walker hints something of the same kind, but he is a very grave offender with regard to Burns's later years, and has come under a most truculent but not altogether undeserved castigation from Professor Wilson. In fact, Heron, Currie, and Walker have been too free in giving circulation to popular gossip, and to the whispers and innuendoes of rumour, always to be distrusted in the case of any man of more than usual mark who has recently died. And this, at a time when the poet's exemplary wife and young family, as well as his most respectable brother and mother, could not fail to know and suffer from such gratuitous publicity given to private shortcomings, on the supposition even that what they published was the unvarnished truth. That Burns was a gauger, and had been a ploughman, and that therefore, as one of the *plebs*, his reputation might be discussed in a spirit of freedom and plain-speaking that would not have been readily thought of in the case of an individual of higher social standing, whose dearest and nearest relatives must necessarily have been cognisant of everything published affecting his memory, is the excuse now made for his early biographers. It is a lame one, but in the case of Currie we are willing to allow it, as he proved himself the most devoted and least selfish friend of all that took an interest in the poet's family. His sins of

commission proceeded from no foolish notion of his own superiority, nor does he ever speak in the same patronising spirit of condescension which is so offensive in Professor Walker; but he had not realised that Burns was no vulgar prodigy, but a poet of a great and original genius, who was not merely to slip into a humble niche in the temple of poesy, under shelter of his ploughman's plaid, but into the most conspicuous one allotted to his century, and with all a poet's singing robes about him. Mr Carlyle puts the case very graphically thus:—"Dr Currie and Mr Walker have both, we think, mistaken one essentially-important thing: their own and the world's true relation to their author, and the style in which it became such men to think and to speak of such a man. Dr Currie loved the poet truly—more perhaps than he avowed to his readers, or even to himself—yet he everywhere introduces him with a certain patronising, apologetic air, as if the polite public might think it strange and half unwarrantable that he, a man of science, a scholar, and gentleman, should do such honour to a rustic. In all this, however, we readily admit that his fault was not want of love, but weakness of faith, and regret that the first and kindest of all our poet's biographers should not have seen farther, or believed more boldly what he saw. Mr Walker offends more deeply in the same kind," &c.

Towards the close of his life, Miss Aiken, daughter of his early Ayr patron, encountered him on the streets of Dumfries; he was gaunt and thin, and exhibited all the marks of ill-health. She insisted that he should go home and get ready for dinner in the house of the friend with whom she was staying, one of the aristocracy of the town. Captain Hamilton, his landlord, also was urgent for a renewal of the intimacy which had formerly existed between them, but which had latterly fallen off somewhat. Some of the country gentlemen and their wives, ladies of the highest culture and delicacy, and such persons of respectability as Gray the teacher, Findlater the supervisor, and Mr Syme of Ryedale, were his

warm friends to the last. So that we may believe that the stories to his discredit were greatly exaggerated, else, in so circumscribed a community, these persons would have fallen away from him as from a leper. The only class that as a body and to a man abjured intimacy with him were the local clergy. This is not to be wondered at, nor taken as a proof, in the absence of other proof, that his society was generally shunned, or deserving to be shunned. In provincial towns in Scotland, and perhaps elsewhere, the local clergy are in a very painful position. As a rule, their fellowship is restricted to the strictest professors of their own congregation. A set of old ladies of unimpeachable orthodoxy and spotless decorum, possessed of the narrowest sympathies, and a few old men of analogous character, supplemented by a sprinkling of juniors, male and female, do all the active part of the congregational work; and to intercourse with these the clergyman for the most part restricts himself. Rarely is he on cordial terms with the members of another denomination. Now, the last man that can be imagined likely to have engaged the sympathies of the Dumfries clergy was the swashbuckler and fighting-man of the New Lights, the author of *The Kirk's Alarm*, *The Ordination*, *Holy Willie's Prayer and Epitaph*, and *The Holy Fair*. A terror of originality and independent thought has ever been the besetting sin of ordinary clergymen; and while Dr Blacklock and Dr Blair and Professor Dugald Stewart would have hailed the poet with the most unaffected cordiality, being themselves superior to misconstruction, and not afraid of manly independence, these Dumfries ministers durst not have associated with the poet at a less price than the favour of "the unco guid or rigidly righteous." And it is lamentable that they should have paid so dear for what was worth so little. Surely if they had been zealous to pluck a brand from the burning, here was a noble opportunity. In the exercise of their sacred functions no inhabitant of the burgh had a prior claim on them; and, to a priest who feared not the face of man, the guiding of

the feet of the author of *The Cotter's Saturday Night* into the way of peace should have been a prime consideration.

We know that his official duties were always punctually discharged. We know that he attended to the education of his children with a degree of care and attention rare in any rank of life, even among men of the most exemplary sobriety. We know now, further, that when it was supposed, falsely and to his hurt, that he had hung his harp on the willows, he was writing the finest songs to be found in any language, restoring others, collecting and writing remarks on Scottish song, corresponding with Mr Thomson and many more. In fact, scarcely a day can have passed in which, in addition to his arduous duties as an officer of the Government, he did not throw off as much original composition, prose or verse, as many professed authors have been accustomed to do, who have given themselves entirely to literature. And it was ignorance of this latter fact in particular that kept his brother Gilbert so long from vindicating the poet's memory from the charges brought against it so unjustly, but in such good faith, by Dr Currie, otherwise so kind and generous. And to vindicate in this way the good name of Burns required great moral courage on the part of Gilbert, as it subjected him to the suspicion of having come to the defence too late, and from some selfish motive; and it actually drew down upon him an indignant rejoinder from Mr Roscoe, Dr Currie's friend. Yet he succeeded in removing at least a part of that obloquy which attached too long to the poet's reputation.

Burns's songs are by many reckoned the best of all his compositions. The inspiration is purer, and the felicities of expression more curious, if that be possible, than in his other productions. The greater proportion of them deals with the tender passion; and no poet of ancient or modern times has treated of it with so much variety of illustration and sentiment, with so much warmth, and, on the whole,

with so much purity. We admit partly Lord Jeffrey's objection that he exhibits no chivalry in his portraiture of the passion; that he never approaches the beloved object in a spirit of deferential respect, but always, even when the "dear idea" is not that of some nut-brown rustic maiden, but of some high-born beauty, places himself on a footing of perfect equality, and strains her to his daring and impassioned breast. This we may attribute partly to the humility of his origin; but also, and in greater part, to the perfect loyalty and unrestrained impetuosity of his feelings. "One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin;" and in certain circumstances, and with certain individuals, there is no such leveller as the tender passion when it exists in purity and unrestrained strength. There is a delicacy of feeling, a refinement of passion and expression in his best love songs, which makes us forget their tone of fearless familiarity, and sometimes a subtlety which surprises like the perfume of a rose that blushes unseen—

"Yestreen, when to the trembling string
The dance gaed through the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw.

"Though this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said among them a',
'Ye are na Mary Morrison.'"

In some of his songs the warmth expands into indelicacy, but always without insidiousness. No poison is ministered in secret to the tender imagination, disguised in sweets. Nothing like the pruriency of Mr Thomas Little is to be found in the direct manly strains of the Ayrshire Poet. Even in those daring stanzas which bear the impress of Burns's misdirected powers, which we, in common with many, have come across in the course of our inquiries, but which were never intended for publication, no healthy mind would find much that could injure, thus testifying to the native nobility and directness of his character.

The following simile has never been equalled in its kind:—

*“As in the bosom o’ the stream
The moonbeam dwells at dewy e’en;
So trembling, pure, was infant love
Within the breast o’ bonny Jean!”*

We have always thought the following expression of feeling by a rustic lover inimitable from its naturalness and purity:—

- “Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
‘Mang moors and mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has closed,
And I’ll away to Nanny, O.
- “The westlin’ wind blows loud and shrill;
The night’s baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I’ll get my plaid, and out I’ll steal,
And owre the hills to Nannie, O.
- “My Nannie’s charming, sweet, and young;
Nae artfu’ wiles to win ye, O;
May ill befa’ the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nannie, O.
- “Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she’s bonnie, O;
The opening gowan, wet wi’ dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O.
- “A country lad is my degree,
And few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be,
I’m welcome aye to Nannie, O.
- “My riches a’s my penny fee,
And I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl’s gear ne’er troubles me,
My thoughts are a’—my Nannie, O.
- “Our auld guilman delights to view
His sheep and kye thrive bonnie, O;
But I’m as blithe that hauds his pleugh,
And has nae care but Nannie, O.
- “Come weel, come woe, I care nae by,
I’ll tak what Heaven will send me, O;
Nae ither care in life hae I,
But live and love my Nannie, O.”

To show with what skill he could seize upon a line or two of a song that was floating up and down the country, and com-

plete it in the spirit of the original, we subjoin the following "splendid lyric," as Mr Lockhart justly designates it :—

"Go fetch to me a pint o' wine,
And fill it in a silver tassie ;
That I may drink, before I go,
A service to my bonnie lassie ;
The boat rocks at the pier o' Leith,
Fu' loud the wind blows frae the Ferry,
The ship rides by the Berwick Law,
And I maun leave my bonny Mary.

"The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are rankèd ready ;
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
The battle closes thick and bloody ;
But it's not the roar o' sea or shore
Wad make me langer wish to tarry ;
Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar—
It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary."

One verse more from his love songs—

"Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

Byron uses this stanza as the motto to *The Bride of Abydos*. Scott says it contains the essence of a thousand love-tales. And Mrs Jameson says these lines are in themselves a complete romance. "They are the alpha and omega of feeling, and contain the essence of an existence of pain and pleasure distilled into one burning drop."

Three other classes of songs have been produced by him in equal perfection—First, Domestic Songs, 'of which *John Anderson my Jo, John*, is the finest specimen. Second, Bacchanalian Songs, represented best by *Willie brewed a peck o' maut*, and illustrated by the *Earnest Prayer and Cry*, and *Scotch Drink*. These are by no means coarse, as some dull fools suppose. They breathe the finest and most ethereal spirit of Bacchus, matched only by some of the exquisite lyrics of the Elizabethan era, and infinitely raised above the emanations of Anacreon's muse by superior vigour and by a rare sense of humour. We never think of

Anacreon but as an old debauchee, unredeemed by a single unselfish trait. Beyond the solacements of Venus and Bacchus he seems never to have had an aspiration. And, third, War Songs, as *The Song of Death*, and *Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*. Most people recollect Mr Syme's account of the circumstances under which the last was composed. Burns and he were riding over the hills of Galloway, amid the sublimities of a thunder-storm. It is, by acclamation, the best war-ode ever written. In it he rivals Tyrtæus. The same steady gazing upon and contempt of death, the same stern patriotism, and the same disregard of the horrors of a "foughten field."

From his earliest years he had studied song-writing as a craft. He had in the course of his ramblings over Scotland visited the scene of every remarkable song except Lochaber and the Braes of Bellenden. And his earliest poetic and patriotic desire was that for poor auld Scotland's sake he "might sing a sang at least." Hence his enthusiasm in everything pertaining to Scottish song, and his generous offer of assistance to Johnson in getting up the *Scots Musical Museum*. From his first letter to Johnson, in May 1787, to his last, in July 1797, he never ceased to take a lively interest in that work. In the department of Scottish poetry he was virtually the editor, though an unpaid one. Among Johnson's papers Cromek saw no fewer than 184 of the pieces which compose the collection written out in Burns's own hand. Thus for upwards of ten years he busied himself about a work for which all the remuneration he asked or expected was a copy now and then for a friend. "I am ashamed," he writes to Johnson, not much more than a fortnight before his death, "to ask another favour of you, because you have been so very good already; but my wife has a very particular friend of hers, a young lady who sings well, to whom she wishes to present the *Scots Musical Museum*. If you have a spare copy, will you be so obliging as to send it by the very first *fly*, as I am anxious to have it soon."

A much more ambitious undertaking in the same line was projected by George Thomson, clerk to the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Manufactures in Scotland. He was assisted by some musical amateurs in Edinburgh, and among them by the Honourable Andrew Erskine. It was resolved to solicit the co-operation of Burns, and Thomson wrote to him in September 1792. In his letter the terms of the engagement are explicitly stated; and as much controversy has arisen on this subject, it is well to note the following sentences:—"We will esteem your poetical assistance a particular favour, besides paying any *reasonable* price you shall please to demand for it. Profit is quite a secondary consideration with us, and we are resolved to spare neither pains nor expense on the publication." Burns agreed, with an enthusiasm that might have been anticipated, to embark with them in an undertaking that jumped so exactly with his predilections, and gratified his most cherished patriotic longings. He wrote:—"As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price; for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, wages, fee, hire, &c., would be downright prostitution of soul!" Mr Thomson's offer of remuneration was extremely guarded; Burns's rejection of it was explicit and peremptory. The undertaking would be expensive, and might prove a failure, and Thomson was not then in much better circumstances than Burns. Besides, the affairs of the poet wore a promising aspect, and no immediate need of money pressed. In the ordinary affairs of life, his views were much more business-like than is usually supposed; but in so congenial a task as song-writing, and for a work with whose projectors "profit was quite a secondary consideration," it was clearly impossible for him to be influenced by pecuniary motives.

In a letter to the Rev. P. Carfrae he had said—"The profits of the labours of a man of genius are, I hope, as honour-

able as any profits whatever." And he had printed the Kilmarnock edition of his poems to raise a sum of money to pay his passage out of the country. He had, further, realised about £600 from the Edinburgh edition, printed by Creech. His only motive, then, in assisting Johnson and Thomson so efficiently for nothing with songs whose equals could not have been purchased anywhere for money was, not a belief in the impropriety of an author's living by the productions of his brain, but solely a high sense of patriotism, and of boundless pleasure in the work itself. Towards the close of his life his circumstances, from the increase of his family, and from the pressure on British commerce from the war with France, were considerably more straitened than they had been in Ellisland. He was sometimes obliged to borrow small sums, which, however, he punctually repaid; and sometimes his accounts with his landlord and his drapers, for instance, were allowed to stand over longer than would have been expected from a man of his punctilious independence had payment been easy for him. That he never, therefore, bethought himself of adding to his income by the publication of his later productions, shows the generous spirit in which they were composed. The too generous, the unjustly generous spirit—for no more sacred obligation than the comfortable upbringing of a family, and securing the peace and self-respect which freedom from petty cares for paltry sums tends to produce—is incumbent on a parent. It does seem strange that he would rather stoop to *borrow* where he could so easily have commanded money by his own honourable exertions. Nobility of spirit endures no severer test than the pressure of poverty. And that Burns would not write songs for money, that he refused £50 a year from a London newspaper for occasional poems, and that he rejected with scorn the offer from a miscreant of a large sum for the looser productions of his pen, and for the pieces of kindred spirit that his love for the Scottish muse, even when higher kilted than decorum warranted, had prompted him to

collect and commit to writing, all tend to prove his naturally high-toned character.

And yet no man was more alive to the pleasures that money could purchase, or to the respect that the possession of it generally secures. His Edinburgh life, and his intercourse with the local aristocracy, showed him persons in the enjoyment of all the material comforts and *agrémens* of life, of whose understanding and character he thought meanly. And herein lay the great mistake of his life—that he hankered after and enjoyed with exquisite keenness the pleasures that wealth could procure, and yet chose to act otherwise than the accumulation of wealth demands. Between poesy and worldly success he could never fairly decide. When his pride met with a rebuff he merely talked of his independence, and forgot in the next social circle the wounds under which he had lately smarted. And yet had he brought his poetical talents into market he could have secured worldly independence, and along with it self-respect and the respect of others. However, to use the words of Carlyle, “not as a hired soldier, but as a patriot, would he strive for the glory of his country ; so he cast from him the poor sixpence a day, and served zealously as a volunteer. Let us not grudge him this last luxury of his existence ; let him not have appealed to us in vain ! The money was not necessary to him ; he struggled through without it ; long since, these guineas would have been gone, and now the high-mindedness of refusing them will plead for him in all hearts for ever.”

After Burns had been contributing to Thomson's work for nine months, that gentleman wrote to him that the undertaking was now entirely on his own responsibility, the gentlemen who had agreed to join him in the speculation having requested to be let off. He goes on—“But thanks, my friend, are a poor return for what you have done. As I shall be benefited by the publication, you must suffer me to enclose a small mark of my gratitude, [Five Pounds,] and to repeat it afterwards when I find it convenient. Do not re-

turn it, for, by heaven ! if you do, our correspondence is at an end." To this Burns's answer was extraordinary. "I assure you that you truly hurt me with your pecuniary parcel. *It degrades me in my own eyes.* However, to return it would savour of affectation ; but, as to any more traffic of that debtor and creditor kind, I swear, by that HONOUR which crowns the upright statue of ROBERT BURNS'S INTEGRITY, on the least motion of it, I will indignantly spurn the bypast transaction, and from that moment commence entire stranger to you !" What renders this the more wonderful is, that we have convincing proof that at this very time the possession of a few pounds would have been of great service to him ; and that, in fact, he had to borrow, and with a feeling of shame, and a confession and explanation of poverty, from a gentleman under no obligation to assist him. Thomson, however, did continue occasionally to remunerate him in the way he thought least likely to offend, as by making Mrs Burns the present of a shawl, and the poet himself that of a drawing by Allan from the *Cotter's Saturday Night* ; while he was not niggardly in furnishing him with copies of the first half-volume of the *Melodies*—all that was published in his lifetime.

Ill health, and increasing pecuniary difficulties, magnified, doubtless, by his depressed spirits and gloomy imagination, at last, shortly before his death, made him apply, in a letter written under great excitement, to Thomson for five pounds ; not, however, as a gift, which under any circumstances it could not have been, but as before-hand payment of work to be furnished for the *Melodies*. "After all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel scoundrel of a haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me into jail. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness ; but the horrors of a jail have made me half distracted. I do not ask all this

gratuitously ; for, upon returning health, I hereby promise and engage to furnish you with five pounds' worth of the neatest song-genius you have seen." 'Thomson's reply is as follows—"Ever since I received your melancholy letters by Mrs Hislop [three months before, let the reader remember] I have been ruminating in what manner I could alleviate your sufferings. Again and again I thought of a pecuniary offer, but the recollection of one of your letters on this subject, and the fear of offending your independent spirit, checked my resolution. I thank you heartily, therefore, for the frankness of your letter of the 12th, and with great pleasure enclose a draft for the very sum I proposed sending. Would I were Chancellor of the Exchequer but for one day, for your sake !" This is all that passed between Burns and Thomson on this subject. After the poet's death Thomson was blamed in different quarters for having acted shabbily to him and his family, and he attempted several not very satisfactory defences. Had he spoken the truth manfully, and confessed himself to have been in straitened circumstances, as is well known that he was when Burns wrote that last affecting letter ; that in fact the five pounds he sent so promptly had first to be *borrowed*, he would have come out of the controversy more honourably than he has done.

Professor Walker, whom we consider a pompous prig, came to his defence. When he talks of "the delicate mind of Mr Thomson," we cannot forget how far he had outraged common decency in his account of his last interview with Burns, and must infer that he thought Mrs Burns the gauger's widow, and the gauger's other relatives, to have been, one and all, without that superfine article, "a delicate mind." The letter he quotes from Lord Woodhouselee shows only that "that highly respectable gentleman and accomplished writer" knew nothing whatever of the true state of the case. That Burns was as much indebted to Thomson for his good counsels and active friendship as a man, as for his strictures as a critic, are equally true ; for his criticisms were generally rejected,

his active friendship was confined to giving him £10 and a trumpery shawl for a collection of songs and other writings intrinsically priceless, and which were instrumental in yielding to Thomson hundreds of pounds ; and his good counsels, if advice as from a Mentor is meant, were never offered, never durst have been offered, to the haughty poet on whose face he had never looked, or whom at least he had never met.

We have often wondered if the following is to be included among the "good counsels" referred to :—"Pray, my good sir, is it not possible for you to muster a volume of poetry? If too much trouble to you, in the present state of your health some literary friend might be found here, who would select and arrange from your manuscripts, and take upon him the task of editor. In the meantime, it could be advertised to be published by subscription. Do not shun this mode of obtaining the value of your labour; remember Pope published the 'Iliad' by subscription. Think of this, my dear Burns, and do not reckon me intrusive with my advice. You are too well convinced of the respect and friendship I bear you, to impute anything I say to an unworthy motive."

Is it possible Thomson did not know, or that he thought Burns had forgotten, that he had himself published both the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh editions of his poems by subscription? Why, he might easily have published a very respectable volume indeed, composed of the songs in the possession of Johnson and Thomson, of *Tam o' Shanter*, given to Captain Grose, as cheaply as to the gentlemen above mentioned their treasures had been, and of *The Jolly Beggars*, the best thing of its kind in British literature, but of which Burns himself had not a copy, so prodigal was he of what others would have coined—and who could have blamed them?—into solid gold. A few tales like *Tam o' Shanter*, and a handful of songs given annually to the public, had he been strict to turn the productions of his genius, as he would not have scrupled to do the labour of his hands, to good account,

would have brought him not only competence but wealth, lighted up his home with sunshine, banished care and anxiety from his troubled bosom, and furnished him with most congenial and ennobling labour—labour twice blest, and imparting conscious dignity to a life, wasted in great measure in pursuits which he could hardly like, in occasional indulgences which he was forced to deplore, and in fretting cares for daily bread which unhinged the balance of an “equal mind.” When we compare the ample means and leisure of Wordsworth, not more divinely-gifted than Burns, with *his* worried life and narrow resources, we are compelled with regret to own that to Burns himself after all, more than to aught external, is the difference to be attributed.

When one has a bad case to conduct he is very apt to fall into contradictions. In a letter to Professor Walker, after he must have realised a very good sum from the *Melodies*, Thomson says—“I am not even yet compensated for the precious time consumed by me in poring over musty volumes,” &c. Now in his letter to Burns with the first five pounds he had written: “I should be somewhat compensated for my labour by the pleasure I shall receive from the music.” And in a letter to Robert Chambers, written apparently under a partial eclipse of judgment, as he hints in it that he might have retained all the songs and letters, and not have granted the use of them to Dr Currie for the edition of the works he was to undertake for behoof of the poet’s family, after pluming himself upon his temporary surrender of them, (he, of course, retained the right to publish them in the work for which they were originally intended,) he says:—“For thus surrendering the manuscripts I received, both verbally and in writing, the warm thanks of the trustees for the family—Mr John Syme and Mr Gilbert Burns—who considered what I had done as a *fair return* for the poet’s generosity of conduct to me.” He must have been at his wit’s end when he had recourse to so lame and impotent a defence. For nearly half a century he must have reaped annually a large sum

from the profits of a work, the great charm of which is Burns's exquisite lyrics ; and as Mr Lockhart has remarked, the fault lay in not arranging *in limine* the poet's proportion of the rewards. And when in ill health, and as might have easily been guessed in circumstances not too comfortable, he might have insisted, and Burns would not have been ill to persuade, that at least a prospective interest in the profits, if any, should be secured to his family in the event of his decease.

We are now drawing to a close. Ill health had broken the poet down. He had gone to Brow, on the Solway, for sea-bathing, but without obtaining any permanent relief. He knew his end was at hand ; and he looked death calmly in the face. He was even cheerful in his intercourse with some female friends who saw him there. His cares were all for his family to be left unprovided for, and for his Jean about once more to become a mother. It was from Brow he wrote that letter for five pounds—from Brow that he addressed that last ineffectual appeal to Mrs Dunlop for an explanation of the withdrawal of her friendship. Dr Currie says that the poet got a satisfactory explanation. But it was not so ; and his last farewell must have touched her heart, for it was naturally a kind one, with many a secret pang, when she learned that the bard was beyond reach of her sympathy or reproach. As the shadows of the dark valley were closing around him, the falling off of his friends would be doubly painful. His had ever been the open hand, and many had been the recipients of his warm-hearted charity. But nothing could be more painful for his mind to dwell on, than that the wife and children of one whose watchword had been Independence should be indebted for daily bread to alien bounty. He had given himself wholly for Scotland. Her peasant life, her patriotism, superstitions, heroic-memories, history, music—had all been illustrated by his splendid genius. Before him the literature of his country had lost all tinge of nationality. Her writers were afraid to be Scottish, and, from a dread of

English sarcasm, were aiming at Addisonian neatness, or moulding themselves on French forms, or exhibiting an insipid cosmopolitanism. With the instinctive glance of genius he saw a whole world of poetry revealed to him in the everyday life, the ways and customs, loves and griefs of his fellow-peasants, and as he sung, the domain of human consciousness and happiness was enlarged. Neither Smollett nor Dr Moore, both accomplished men, and one of them of splendid genius, ever had the courage to attempt the Scottish dialect. Moore, in fact, attempted to dissuade Burns from its use. But he knew better the region of his power; and nowhere is he so happy as in the use of his native dialect, which in his hand is never vulgar, and to which he is not slavishly bound; for when he rises to serious passion the language insensibly acquires dignity, and doffs much of its Scottish garb. Nor in his Scotch is he like the modish minstrels of our own day, who in their attempts in the good old Doric use a dialect that belongs to no district or time, a piebald livery of words differing in locality and in the era of their use. Since his time, in the path which he so happily opened up, we have had our Sir Walter Scott, our John Wilson, our John Galt, and many others. Nowise is it now attempted to be concealed that an author is Scottish and imbued with a Scottish spirit, but rather otherwise. Thus far, then, Scotland was a debtor to Burns; and though she neglected him when alive, her people, gentle and simple, being intent on their own well-being chiefly, it was not to be doubted that she would adopt the family of her great minstrel, and wipe off in her generous exertions for *them* the stigma of having allowed *him* to sink into the grave with a heart saddened for those he left behind. This, we say, could not be doubted. But Burns would be the last to whom it would occur. He never vapoured of what his country owed him; his thought was rather how much he owed his country. He did not theatrically leave his little ones as a bequest to an ungrateful, but haply in the future a repentant people. He knew from his first appearance as an

author, nay, before it, of his genius. Would that his last sad hours had been illuminated by a forecast of his own immortality, and of the zeal with which Scotland would hasten to atone to the children for their neglect of the father. The sum for which he fancied that he would be thrown into jail was £7, 4s., overdue for his volunteer uniform. Nothing alarms an ordinary honest Scotchman so much as a letter from a *writer* demanding payment. All the pains and penalties of the law stare him in the face. Especially if he has not the money necessary to liquidate the debt, his fears are acute in proportion to his pride and his honesty. How acutely Burns felt may be learnt from this, that he wrote two letters *on the same day*, one from Dumfries to his cousin James Burnes, Montrose, for £10, and one from Brow to Thomson, quoted above, for £5. The £10 sent from Montrose were not drawn, the draft having been found among the poet's papers after his death. Mr Syme says the people of Dumfries would never have allowed Burns to have been taken to prison for such a sum. It is an unfortunate expression. First, as it is nothing to the point of Burns's anxiety, because he could not know this, nay, would have died almost ere he had acquainted the people of Dumfries with his difficulties; and, second, because his townsmen were not aware of his being in that particular pecuniary embarrassment.

As sea-bathing promised no permanent relief, he returned to Dumfries on the eighteenth of July. It was with difficulty he walked up the small *brae* leading to his own house. His first act was to write to his father-in-law in Mauchline to send Mrs Armour to wait on her daughter, who was hourly expecting to be brought to bed. The house in Millhole Brae must have been at this time a sad one. Not, however, unblest by the light and love of human sympathy. There was the kind Jessie Lewars, who tended him with filial devotion; there was Findlater, the supervisor, to soothe as far as he could the last moments of his friend; and there was Dr Maxwell, skilful and affectionate. A gloom overspread

Dumfries and the neighbourhood when it was understood that the great poet was indeed dying. The streets were filled with groups anxious to know of their illustrious townsman. All political and personal rancours were forgotten. It was enough that a great, ill-requited countryman, the greatest living Scotchman, was grappling with the last enemy in the humble tenement hard by; that there was a wife about to become a mother and a widow, and four helpless boys to be orphans. When it was known that the last moment was at hand, his four sons, who had been removed to the house of Mr Lewars, were sent for to witness the parting scene; and, his family and friends around him, and his bonnie Jean in bed in an adjoining chamber, on the morning of the 21st of July 1796, muttering an execration against the legal agent whose letter had embittered his parting hours, this world-weary soul passed away into the unknown and infinite.

The body was laid out for the grave in a plain coffin, and had been wrapped about with a linen sheet. In the bed and round the coffin flowers were strewn. On the evening of the 25th the remains were removed from his own house to the town-hall. They were buried on the following day with military honours by his brother volunteers. Two regiments, one of infantry and one of cavalry, lined the streets from the town-hall to the burying-ground—a distance of more than half a mile. It was calculated that from ten to twelve thousand individuals took part in the procession or lined the streets. The body after a little delay was lowered into the grave, and few faces were dry. The volunteers fired some straggling shots over the resting-place of their comrade; the grave was filled in, the green sod replaced, and the people gradually melted away.

It is sad to know that while the remains of the poet were being thus honoured, his widow was in the pangs of childbirth. The child was named after Dr Maxwell, and died in infancy.

A splen^did mausoleum now covers the poet's ashes. Over-

looking the banks of the Doon arises a magnificent monument to his memory, while another graces the Calton Hill in "Edina, Scotia's darling seat." His country took charge of his Jean and her children whom he had loved so well; and at this hour no dearer names thrill a Scotchman's heart than those of the honoured "sons of Burns." Pilgrims from all lands, with pious regard, repair to the humble cottage where he was born, to Alloway's auld haunted kirk, and the banks and braes o' bonnie Doon. And as they wander over the scenes made immortal by a peasant's song, heart clings closer to heart, the pride of birth and wealth melts away in a feeling of common humanity, and it is felt indeed that "a man's a man for a' that."

That his country was niggardly to him while he was alive,—when he asked for bread giving him a stone, and then piling monumental marble over "the poor inhabitant below,"—has been often made the theme of reproach to her. But in all countries the truly great men, the prophets, who were not of the market-place, who did not contribute to the material *wealth* of the people, have often been neglected and even put to death. Think of Socrates, think of the Christian apostles, think of Galileo, think of Tasso. Let England think of Butler, of Otway, of Bloomfield, of Clare, and

"Of Chatterton, the wondrous boy,
The sleepless soul that perish'd in his pride,"

and well may Scotland bear up her head in the comparison. All her sons and daughters think more highly of their country that Burns was of it. Let a Scotchman travel where he will, he is, if otherwise worthy, made more welcome for Burns's sake. That the poet was misappreciated while alive was due to many causes—religious, political, and personal. Besides, how often does it happen that the man we see before us, busy with ourselves in the prosaic battle of life, fighting for bread, jostling us perhaps, in no dignified position of brief authority, we cannot properly discern. Not till he is removed from us

by being lifted up into some official or other eminence, or hidden from us by the curtain of the grave, do we begin to know his greatness. Not in this generation do we think a man like Burns would be allowed to struggle with base entanglements. To talk of the unknowable is, however, bootless. Enough that Scotland's eyes were opened in time to succour and honour those who bore the poet's name, and that now she cherishes with an undying love the memory of

ROBERT BURNS.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BURNS.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY.

WEE, modest, crimson-tippèd flower,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my power,
Thou bonny gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibour sweet,
The bonny lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
Wi' speckled breast,
When upward springing, blithe, to greet,
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
High sheltering woods and wa's maun shield;
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorn's the histie stibble-field,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the *share* uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet floweret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
 On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd !
 Unskilful he to note the card
 Of prudent lore,
 Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
 And whelm him o'er !

Such fate to suffering worth is given,
 Who long with wants and woes has striven,
 By human pride or cunning driven,
 To misery's brink,
 Till, wrench'd of every stay but Heaven,
 He, ruin'd, sink !

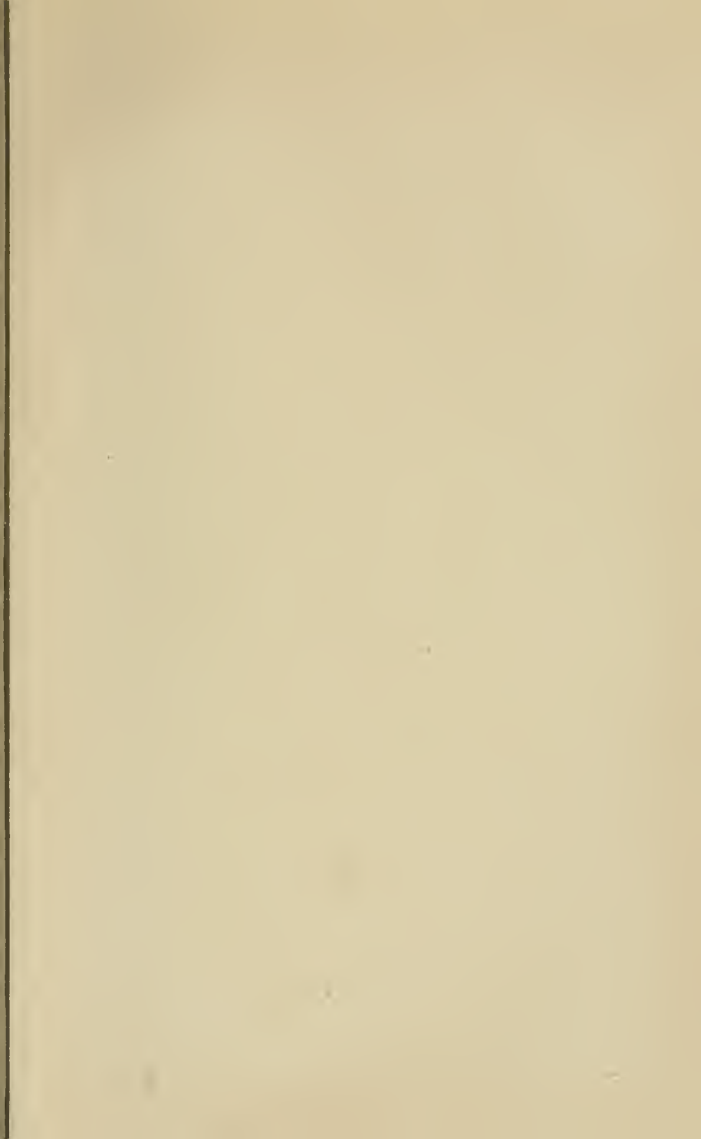
Even thou who mourn'st the daisy's fate,
 That fate is thine—no distant date ;
 Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
 Full on thy bloom,
 Till, crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
 Shall be thy doom !

IS THERE, FOR HONEST POVERTY.

Is there, for honest poverty,
 That hangs his head, and a' that ?
 The coward slave, we pass him by,
 We dare be poor for a' that !
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Our toils obscure, and a' that ;
 The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
 The man's the gowd for a' that !

What though on hamely fare we dine,
 Wear hodden gray, and a' that ;
 Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
 A man's a man for a' that !
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their tinsel show, and a' that ;
 The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
 Is king o' men for a' that !

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
 Wha struts, and stares, and a' that ;
 Though hundreds worship at his word,
 He's but a coof for a' that !
 For a' that, and a' that,
 His riband, star, and a' that ;
 The man of independent mind,
 He looks and laughs at a' that !





The toil-worn cottager frae his labour goes,
This night his weekly toil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary o'er the moor his course does homeward bend.

A king can mak a belted knight,
 A marquis, duke, and a' that;
 But an honest man's aboon his might,
 Guid faith he maunna fa' that!
 For a' that, and a' that,
 Their dignities, and a' that,
 The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
 Are higher ranks than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may—
 As come it will for a' that—
 That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
 May bear the gree, and a' that;
 For a' that, and a' that,
 It's comin' yet for a' that,
 That man to man, the world o'er,
 Shall brothers be for a' that!

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

My loved, my honour'd, much-respected friend!
 No mercenary bard his homage pays;
 With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end:
 My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
 To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
 The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
 The native feelings strong, the guileless ways:
 What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
 Ah! though his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween!

November chill blows loud wi' angry sigh;
 The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
 The miry beasts retreating frae the plough;
 The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose;
 The toil-worn cotter frae his labour goes,
 This night his weekly toil is at an end,
 Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
 Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
 And, weary, o'er the moor his course does hameward bend.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
 Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
 Th' expectant wee things, toddlin', stacher through
 To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise and glee.
 His wee bit ingle, blinking bonnily,
 His clean hearthstane, his thrifty wife's smile,
 The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
 Does a' his weary carking cares beguile,
 And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,
 At service out amang the farmers roun':
 Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
 A canny errand to a neibour town:
 Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
 In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her ee,
 Comes hame, perhaps to show a braw new gown,
 Or deposit her sair-won penny-fee,
 To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

Wi' joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
 And each for other's weelfare kindly speirs:
 The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnoticed, fleet;
 Each tells the uncoss that he sees or hears;
 The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
 Anticipation forward points the view.
 The mother, wi' her needle and her shears,
 Gars auld claes look amais't as weel's the new—
 The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's and their mistress's command,
 The youngers a' are warn'd to obey;
 And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,
 And ne'er, though out o' sight, to jauk or play:
 "And oh! be sure to fear the Lord alway!
 And mind your duty, duly, morn and night!
 Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
 Implore His counsel and assisting might:
 They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!"

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door,
 Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
 Tells how a neibour lad cam o'er the moor,
 To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
 The wily mother sees the conscious flame
 Sparkle in Jenny's ee, and flush her cheek,
 Wi' heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,
 While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
 Weel pleased the mother hears it's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
 A strappin' youth; he tak's the mother's eye;
 Blithe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;
 The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
 The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
 But blate and lathefu', scarce can weel behave;
 The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
 What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;
 Weel pleased to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

O happy love!—where love like this is found!—
 O heart-felt raptures!—bliss beyond compare!
 I've paced much this weary, mortal round,
 And sage experience bids me this dec lare—

"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
 One cordial in this melancholy vale,
 'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
 In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,
 Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale."

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
 A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
 That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
 Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
 Curse on his perjured arts! dissembling smooth!
 Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exiled?
 Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
 Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
 Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild!

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
 The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food:
 The soup their only hawkie does afford,
 That yont the ballan snugly chows her cood!
 The dame brings forth, in complimentary mood,
 To grace the lad, her wheel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,
 And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid:
 The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
 How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
 The sire turns o'er, we patriarchal grace,
 The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride;
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
 His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
 He wales a portion with judicious care;
 And "Let us worship GOD!" he says, with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
 Perhaps "Dundee's" wild-warbling measures rise,
 Or plaintive "Martyrs," worthy of the name;
 Or noble "Elgin" beets the heavenward flame,
 The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
 Compared with these, Italian trills are tame;
 The tickled ear no heartfelt raptures raise;
 Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
 How Abram was the friend of GOD on high;
 Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny:
 Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
 Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
 Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;
 How HE, who bore in heaven the second name,
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head :
 How His first followers and servants sped,
 The precepts sage they wrote to many a land :
 How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand ;
 And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down, to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,
 The saint, the father, and the husband prays :
 Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
 That thus they all shall meet in future days :
 There ever bask in uncreated rays,
 No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear,
 Together hymning their Creator's praise,
 In such society, yet still more dear ;
 While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compared with this, how poor religion's pride,
 In all the pomp of method, and of art,
 When men display to congregations wide
 Devotion's every grace, except the heart !
 The Power, incensed, the pageant will desert,
 The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole :
 But, haply, in some cottage far apart,
 May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul ;
 And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol.

Then homeward all take off their several way ;
 The youngling cottagers retire to rest :
 The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
 And proffer up to Heaven the warm request
 That HE, who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
 And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
 Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
 For them and for their little ones provide ;
 But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
 That makes her loved at home, revered abroad :
 Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
 "An honest man's the noblest work of GOD ;"
 And, certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
 The cottage leaves the palace far behind.
 What is a lordling's pomp ?—a cumbrous load,
 Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
 Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined !

O Scotia ! my dear, my native soil !
 For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent !
 Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
 Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content !

And, oh! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
 From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
 Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
 A virtuous populace may rise the while,
 And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide
 That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted heart:
 Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
 Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
 (The patriot's God, peculiarly Thou art,
 His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
 Oh, never, never Scotia's realm desert;
 But still the patriot, and the patriot-hard,
 In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

THE POOR AND HONEST SODGER.

WHEN wild war's deadly blast was blawn,
 And gentle peace returning,
 Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
 And mony a widow mourning;
 I left the lines and tented field,
 Where lang I'd been a lodger,
 My humble knapsack a' my wealth,
 A poor and honest sodger.

A leal light heart was in my breast,
 My hand unstain'd wi' plunder,
 And for fair Scotia, hame again,
 I cheery on did wander.
 I thought upon the banks o' Coil,
 I thought upon my Nancy,
 I thought upon the witching smile
 That caught my youthful fancy.

At length I reach'd the bonny glen
 Where early life I sported;
 I pass'd the mill, and trysting thorn,
 Where Nancy aft I courted:
 Wha spied I but my ain dear maid,
 Down by her mother's dwelling!
 And turn'd me round to hide the flood
 That in my een was swelling.

Wi' altered voice, quoth I, "Sweet lass,
 Sweet as yon hawthorn's blossom,
 Oh! happy, happy may he be,
 That's dearest to thy bosom!"

My purse is light, I've far to gang,
 And fain wad be thy lodger;
 I've served my king and country lang—
 Take pity on a sodger."

Sae wistfully she gazed on me,
 And lovelier was than ever;
 Quo' she, "A sodger ance I lo'ed,
 Forget him shall I never:
 Our humble cot, and hamely fare,
 Ye freely shall partake it,
 That gallant badge—the dear cockade—
 Ye're welcome for the sake o't."

She gazed—she redden'd like a rose—
 Syne pale like ony lily;
 She sank within my arms, and cried,
 "Art thou my ain dear Willie?"
 "By Him who made yon sun and sky,
 By whom true love's regarded,
 I am the man; and thus may still
 True lovers be rewarded!

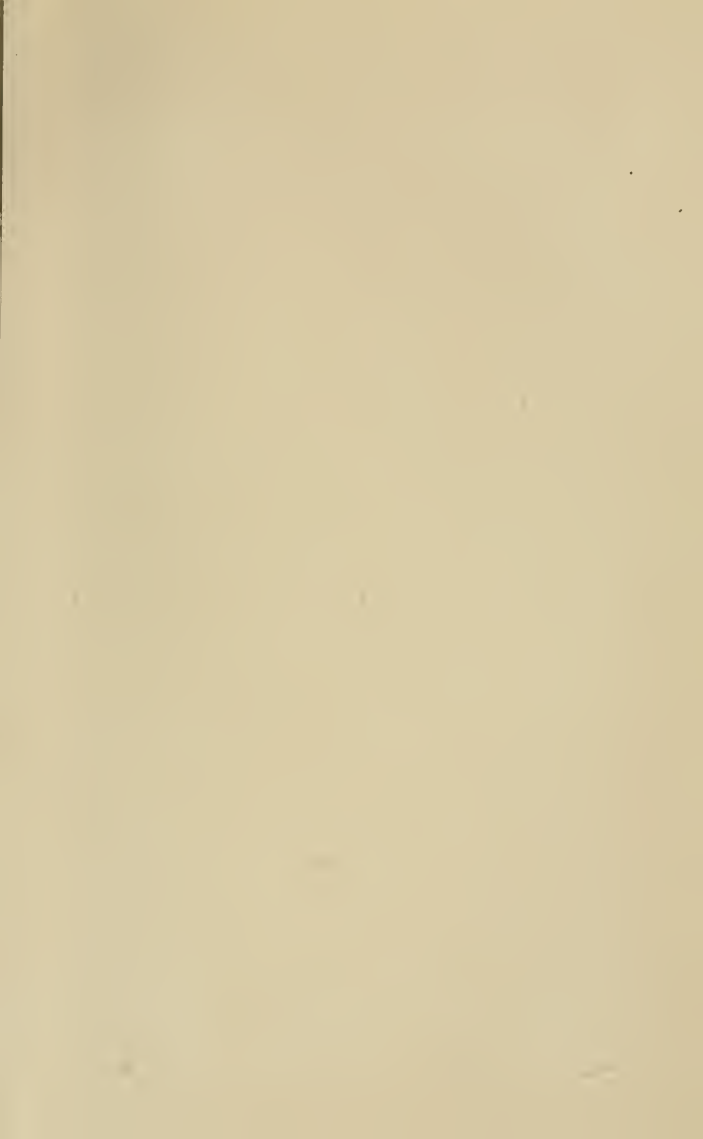
"The wars are o'er, and I'm come hame,
 And find thee still true-hearted;
 Though poor in gear, we're rich in love,
 And mair, we'se ne'er be parted."
 Quo' she, "My grandsire left me gowd,
 A mailen plenish'd fairly;
 And come, my faithful sodger lad,
 Thou'rt welcome to it dearly!"

For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
 The farmer ploughs the manor;
 But glory is the sodger's prize,
 The sodger's wealth is honour:
 The brave poor sodger ne'er despise,
 Nor count him as a stranger;
 Remember, he's his country's stay
 In day and hour of danger.



She gazed—she reddened like a rose—
Sye pale like any dily ;
She sank within my arms, and cried,
“ Art thou my ain dear Willie ? ”

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Le Gallie

BEATTIE.

JAMES BEATTIE, the author of "The Minstrel," was baptized at Laurencekirk, November 25, 1735, ten years before the thunder-cloud of war swept across Scotland, to dissolve in blood on the desolate heath of Culloden. His father, also bearing the name of James, had a small retail shop in Laurencekirk—at that time, and for thirty years after, merely a clachan or kirktown of six or seven houses. In addition to the shop, he rented Boroughmuir Hills, a small farm to the south-east of the village. By the united aid of these he strove to rear his family of six children, of whom James was the youngest, in that system of healthful domestic training, to which, in Scotland, the youth of a former age owed so much. In these efforts he was ably seconded by his wife, Jane Watson, who is said to have been a woman of informed and cultivated mind beyond the common. Indeed Beattie was fortunate in both his parents. "His father," says the writer of the article "Beattie" in the "Biographie Universelle," "was a simple farmer, but that did not hinder him from indulging a natural taste which he felt for poesy : they preserve yet in his family some pieces of verse of his composition." This was written in 1811. In the life of Alexander Ross, schoolmaster of Lochlee in

Forfarshire, prefixed to the edition of his "Helenore ; or, The Fortunate Shepherdess," published in 1812, his biographer, the Rev. Alexander Thomson of Lintrathen, remarks : "Mr Ross has often said that Mr Beattie only wanted education to have made him as much distinguished in the literary world as his son. He was a man of great natural acuteness, of clear and distinct conception, and employed much of his time in reading. He knew something of natural philosophy, and particularly of astronomy, and used to amuse himself in calculating eclipses ; and our author has observed that, as he was self-taught, without the advantage of any man's instruction, his knowledge was truly surprising. He was likewise a poetical genius, and shewed our author some rhymes of considerable merit. In fact it would appear that his mind wanted nothing but cultivation to have raised him to a level with some philosophers and poets, whose merit must always be acknowledged by those who are proper judges of it."

Such is Ross's testimony concerning the elder Beattie ; and he was well qualified to give it, from the intercourse he had enjoyed with him, having for some time previous to 1726 been master of the parish school of Laurencekirk, only a hundred yards or so from Boroughmuir Hills, where the subject of the present memoir was born. And here, in passing, we cannot help remarking that Laurencekirk has been more favoured as the birthplace or residence of men who have won themselves a name by their intellectual acquirements, than many localities far more imposing in appearance. There is its founder, Lord Gardenstone, of whom the burgh may justly be proud. The celebrated Thomas Ruddiman, in February 1695, left his tutorship at Aldbar to become her parish schoolmaster. As we have seen, in 1726 the author of "The Fortunate Shepherdess," filled the same situation. Dr Beattie was born here in 1735. Dr George Cook, author of a "History of the Church of Scotland," was her minister from 1795 to 1828. And here, five years before this latter date,

—that is, in 1823,—George Menzies drove the shuttle and nursed those thoughts which he afterwards embodied in sounding verse, or brought to bear on the successful prosecution of his duties as editor of a Canadian newspaper.

But to return to our more immediate subject. Of the early boyhood of Beattie we know little except what he has told us himself in his works. He was shy, retiring, fond of nature and solitude, given to reading, and even while at school known by the name of the POET. The rudiments of his education he obtained at the parish school, then taught by James Milne, who had deservedly attained considerable reputation as an educator. Beattie lost his father when only seven years of age ; but this loss was, as far as it could be, made up by the increased assiduity and care of his mother, and of his elder brother David, who did everything that affection could do to enable the young student to gratify to the full his love of learning and knowledge,—a kindness Beattie did not forget in after-years, when it was in his power to repay it, as far as such self-sacrificing affection could be repaid.

In 1749, James, then fourteen years of age, was escorted to Aberdeen by his brother David. There were no railways nor even stage-coaches then, and the two brothers set out from home with only one steed between them, and so behaved to walk by turns or ride double. The journey was performed in safety, and James was entered a student of Marischal College, which at that time could boast the name of Dr Blackwell as one of her professors. At the termination of his first session as a student, Beattie proved his powers and diligence, by gaining, as the result of a public competition, the first or highest class bursary attached to his college. This, of course, was a considerable relief to the home funds, as the amount of the bursary would at least suffice for his most pressing wants during the college session. The recess he would spend at home, where the burden of his sustenance would not be severely felt. Beattie continued at

college with much credit the usual period of four sessions, when he took his degree of A.M., and then returned to Laurencekirk to endeavour to turn his acquirements to some practical account.

His original destination was the Church. With the view of entering it, he had attended the theological classes, and, before leaving Aberdeen, had delivered in the hall a trial lecture, which one of his hearers declared was "poetry in prose." The same thing, by the way, was remarked of the trial discourse of Thomson, the author of "The Seasons," whose original destination too was the Church; and there is this further coincidence in the history of the two poets, so similar in the beauty of their imagery, and their pastoral descriptive power, that, from some reason or other, both gave up all thoughts of the pulpit as a vocation.

Young Beattie did not long remain at home. He returned from Aberdeen about the beginning of April 1753; and on the 1st of August the same year, he was appointed parochial schoolmaster and session-clerk of Fordoun, a hamlet about five miles to the north of Laurencekirk. The duties of these offices he discharged, with painstaking diligence, for five years. There was but small opportunity for enjoying the pleasures of refined intercourse in a retired country parish, such as Fordoun was then; what there was, Beattie's approved talent and unassuming deportment soon placed at his command. He quickly secured the favourable notice of Mr Garden, afterwards the famous Lord Gardenstone. He was also honoured with the acquaintanceship of the celebrated Lord Monboddo, whose beautiful family mansion is only about a mile from the scene of Beattie's daily labours.

It was not so much, however, for the influence of his social position in forming his taste, that Beattie's residence at Fordoun is worthy of so marked a place in his history. It was the close intercourse he here enjoyed with nature in all her moods that laid the foundation of his fame as a poet. It was, indeed, a fitting nursery for a minstrel. To use the

vivid words of George Menzies, at one time a pupil in the parish school of Fordoun, and subsequently a gardener at Drumtochty, in the very centre of the romantic scenery he describes, all round we find—

“The shadowy glen, the sweeping strath,
The deep ravine, the rugged path ;
Ly dizzy crag and waterfall,
Untrod and unapproach'd by all,
Save him, whose heart may seldom quail
In peril's hour, the hardy Gael.
The Grampians dimly shadow'd forth,
Like guardian spirits of the north,
Enthroning their majestic forms
Amid the gloom of boreal storms.”

Beattie's tastes were still much the same as when the shy, solitude-loving schoolboy at Laurencekirk. He was fond of wandering alone in the fields. In early morning he might be seen ascending the steep brow of Strathfinella, to watch the sun emerge from the German Ocean ; or, late at night, he would be found wandering among the romantic glades of Drumtochty, observing the stars as they silently came forth in their brightness ; or listing the melancholy wail of the owl awakening the hollow echoes, and peopling the wooded crags with those graceful denizens of the woods—fays and fairies—that owe their existence to the warmth and power of a poetic imagination.

It was during his residence at Fordoun that Beattie first came before the public as an author, by writing several poetical pieces for the *Scots Magazine*. He was only twenty-one years of age when he sent the first of these contributions, yet it is far from devoid of merit.

In 1758, Beattie was appointed one of the masters of the Grammar School, Aberdeen. This opened up to him a wide field of social and congenial intercourse. There was a noble cluster of learned and eminent men connected with Aberdeen at this period—Reid, Gregory, Campbell, and Gerard—men whose works are their best monument, of whom Scotland is

justly proud. Into this elevated circle Beattie soon obtained a hearty welcome, from his character as a man and his reputation as a scholar.

Two years after Beattie's departure from Fordoun, and seven after his leaving Marischal College, one of the professorships in his *alma mater* fell vacant. By the interest of his friends, though very unexpectedly to himself, Beattie received the appointment. Behold him now, no longer as a parish schoolmaster, or a grammar-school teacher, but as a professor, filling the chair of logic and moral philosophy. Not more than twenty-five years of age, with comparatively limited experience in tuition, there was sufficient to suggest grave doubts of his fitness for such an exalted and onerous position. If these doubts ever did arise in the breasts of any, they were quickly dissipated. The young professor immediately set to work ; and, by hard study, and unremitting attention to his students individually, he quickly gained a reputation as a man of letters and a successful instructor, which he retained undiminished to the close of his life.

He had now much more leisure and opportunity for following the bent of his mind, which had always been toward literature. In this year (1760) he published a volume of minor poems, which had so much smoothness and sweetness of diction, and in several parts shewed such descriptive power, as justified his friends in hoping for yet greater things. This work passed through various editions, each having improvements in the shape of alterations, omissions, or additions ; so assiduously did Beattie labour to render his work worthy of the approbation of the public. Indeed, this is a marked characteristic of Beattie as an author, his painstaking diligence in correcting in his works everything that did not satisfy his own exquisite, almost fastidious, taste. Not only so, he invited the severest and most searching criticism of his friends. He was almost as grateful to him who discovered a blemish, as commonly men are to those who discover some hidden worth, some beauty not patent to

the public. Let authors—proverbially the *genus irritabile*—learn from this the path to true excellenee.

In 1767 our author was joined in matrimony to Miss Mary Dun, daughter of Dr Dun, rector of the grammar school in which formerly Beattie had been master. At first every happiness flowed from this union ; but by and by little eccentricities of behaviour on Mrs Beattie's part began to shew themselves, and these eventually took the shape of confirmed insanity, and compelled at last her removal to an asylum at Musselburgh. This terrible calamity crushed at once and for ever the domestic happiness of the husband and father. How deeply the iron had entered into his soul, is evident from his pathetic exclamation after the burial of the last of his two sons : "How could I have borne to have seen their elegant minds mangled with madness?" But at the time of which we write (1767) the dark cloud was still beneath the horizon. Beattie, happy in his domestic relations, happy in his work and in his friends, was free to occupy his mind with whatever subject might be most congenial to his taste.

At this period the cold destructive scepticism of Hume reigned paramount in literary circles in Scotland. The friends of truth saw with concern that there was no champion gone forth to meet the boastful challenge of this mental Goliath ; for what opposition there was, proved of such a character as but increased the arrogance of the foe. This was frequently the subject of correspondence and conversation between Beattie and his friends, and at last he resolved to take up the gauntlet. The result was the "Essay on Truth"—a work which would have kept its author from being forgotten, although he had written nothing else. The Essay was on the unfashionable side of the question, and the Edinburgh publisher to whom it was offered was so doubtful of its success that he would not publish it at his own risk. Sir William Forbes, convinced of the value of the work, without informing Beattie, guaranteed the bookseller against loss, at

the same time remitting fifty guineas to the author as the price of the copyright.

Sir William's opinion proved to be well founded. The book was a triumphant success. It was read everywhere, especially in England, and ran through a number of editions in a short time. It procured for its author two separate and comparatively lengthened interviews with royalty itself, followed by something more tangible still—a royal pension of £200 a year. He had his portrait first painted, and then presented to him, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, in which he is represented sitting in philosophic composure, clad in his doctor's robes, while the Angel of Truth, a most graceful and beautiful figure, is seen in the background driving error and sophistry down to the shades below. The University of Oxford bestowed upon him, unsolicited, the honorary title of LL.D. Besides, the "Essay on Truth" procured for its author the friendship of many eminent persons in England; among others Dr Samuel Johnson, Beilby Porteus, bishop of London, Lord Lyttelton, Mrs Montague, &c. He was offered preferment in the Church of England, if he would enter her pale. This he declined, from motives that do him honour.

But though he refused to leave his chosen sphere of labour, he availed himself of the friendships thus formed, by frequently visiting England to reinvigorate his bodily frame by its softer and more genial climate, and to soothe and tranquillise his mind by experiencing the delights and pleasures of friendly intercourse. These relaxations were now become doubly necessary, from the cankerworm that had blighted and destroyed his domestic happiness; thus increasing, if not causing, a tenderness of constitution, which frequently rendered the least exertion painful and distressing in an extreme degree. This constitutional weakness took the shape of vertigo, or giddiness, from which he was seldom free during the rest of his life. Knowing this, it is amazing what an amount of work he accomplished. He kept up a voluminous correspondence with friends on personal and

literary subjects ; he joined readily in any movement affecting the community of which he was a member ; he was at the service of any friend who required his aid, literary or otherwise ; he was most assiduously and minutely attentive to his work as a professor ; he carefully superintended the education and training of his children ; and yet, amid all these conflicting calls upon his attention, with a constant burden of domestic care hanging over him and weighing him to the earth, and with a frame weakened by chronic disease, he could yet find time and inclination for the composition of works that the world will not willingly let die.

In 1771 appeared the first part of "The Minstrel ; or, The Progress of Genius," and in 1774 the second—a production that, by its delicacy of imagination, by the quiet beauty of its pastoral scenes, and by the exquisite melody of its language, at once gave its author an honourable place among the poets of Great Britain—a position which, most deservedly, he still retains.

Dr Beattie had two sons, James and Montague. To their mental and moral training he devoted himself with all the earnest solicitude of a Christian parent. Nor had his pains been fruitless. The eldest was a young man of wondrous promise—so much so, that, at the request of the Senatus of the College, the Crown in 1787 appointed him colleague and successor to his father, while yet but in the nineteenth year of his age. The father's heart was bound up in his son, who returned his love with the eagerness and uniformity of deep filial affection. But, alas ! the rarest plants are oftenest the first to droop before the cold breath of the pale horseman James Hay Beattie died in 1790 ; and deep was the sorrow of the bereaved father. In one of his letters of this period, alluding to a monument erected to his dead son, he says : "I often dream of the grave that is under it ; I saw with some satisfaction on a late occasion that it is very deep, and capable of holding my coffin laid on that which is already in it."

He had still one son left, and round him his affections gathered with increased earnestness. Though without the extra capabilities of his elder brother, the talents of Montague Beattie were more than respectable ; while his loving heart and lively disposition made up for the want of dazzling accomplishments. He was a universal favourite. Cheered by his watchful assiduity, Dr Beattie laboured on at his accustomed work. In 1790 appeared the first volume of his "Elements of Moral Science;" and in 1793 the second. These, with "Essays on Poetry and Music, Laughter and Ludicrous Composition, and the Use of the Classics," "Dissertations, Moral and Critical," and "Evidences of the Christian Religion," comprised the substance of his lectures to his students. For them, too, he drew up a small *brochure* on Scotticisms, which contains some shrewd verbal criticism. The only other works with which the name of Beattie is connected are one or two papers in *The Lounger*, a letter to Dr Blair on a proposed revisal of the Scottish metrical version of the Psalms, and an account of the life and character of his son, James Hay Beattie.

This testimony of his paternal love was Beattie's last literary exertion. It was finished January 18, 1791. Five years afterwards Montague Beattie died. This stroke was more than his father's mind could bear. His intellect even was touched. He lost all memory of his son's death ; would search through the house for him ; and, not finding him, would say to his niece and housekeeper, Mrs Glennie, "You may think it strange, but I must ask you if I have a son, and where he is." He could only be brought to recollection by a recital of the sufferings of Montague's deathbed. When he looked for the last time upon the dead body, he said, "Now I have done with the world." And so it was in truth. He gave up all study, all recreation, and all correspondence with friends. The following year he became quite a cripple with rheumatism ; and in 1799 he had a stroke of palsy, from which he never entirely recovered ; and, finally, on the

18th of August 1803, he was released from his sufferings by the kindly hand of death.

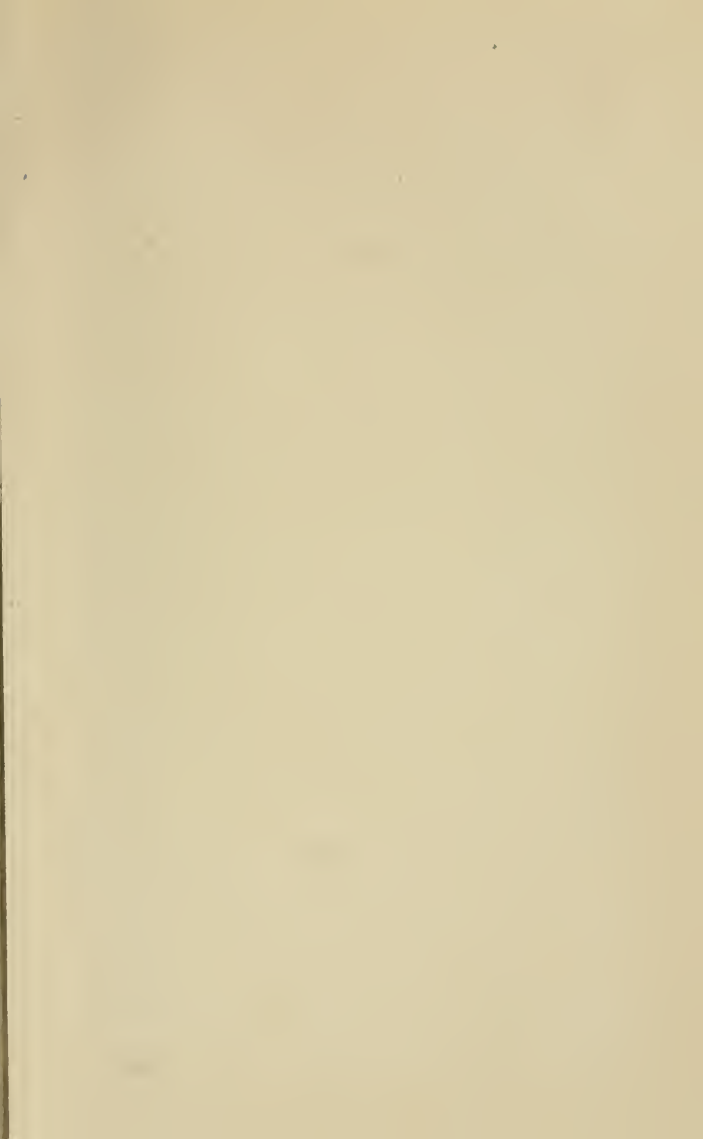
Dr Beattie's intercourse with the world was marked by the courtesy and forbearance of a Christian gentleman; or, if in aught, during the heat of controversy, he overstepped the bounds of propriety, the love he bore to virtue was in fault. In temper he was naturally gentle and placable; but from his close and long-continued study of polemics, it was noticed that, towards the close of his public life, he was in the smallest possible degree inclined to acerbity and sharpness. In his last years all this dross was purified; the original metal alone remained, gentle, radiant, and without alloy.

In his character as a husband and father, Beattie manifested the same sterling qualities, though in a much higher and more attractive degree. Gentle and affectionate, ruling by love rather than fear, he had yet that clear-sighted firmness which kept him from injuring by over-indulgence. Sorely tried as he was by the melancholy fate of his wife, he never murmured nor complained. Even when the fondest hopes of his heart were buried in the grave of his sons, he bowed in silent submission to the decrees of an all-wise Providence. Though the stroke was hard to bear, there was no loud, rebellious grief. He calmly waited for the time when he would rejoin his lost ones, never more to leave them. Were we to sum up in a single word his character as a man, we could not better express it than the poet himself has done, in a stanza of an epitaph, written while in Fordoun:—

“ Forget my frailties, thou art also frail;
Forgive my lapses, for thyself mayest fall;
Nor read unmoved my artless tender tale:
I was a friend, O man, to thee, to all ! ”

As an author, Beattie is distinguished in his prose compositions for the smooth flow of his language and the easy gracefulness of his thoughts. In controversy he sometimes,

though rarely, expresses himself more sharply than would be deemed necessary in the present day; but we only require to realise the times in which he lived, the ominous mutterings of wreck and revolution that were already filling the air, fully to exonerate him from the charge of unnecessary harshness. But it is as a poet that Beattie will be longest and most fondly remembered. As a metaphysician his labours may be, so far as their main purpose is concerned, superseded by more recent investigators, who, thanks to his aid and that of his contemporaries, have been enabled to penetrate further into the regions of speculation; but while the English language lasts, so long will the quiet beauty of the word-pictures in "The Minstrel" charm every student of nature, and that in proportion to his loving familiarity with her gentle and more peaceful scenes.





O ye wild groves, oh ! where is now your bloom
Your flowers, your verdure, and your balmy gloom,
Of late so grateful in the hour of draught ?
Why do the birds, that song and rapture brought
To all your bowers, their musings now forsake ?

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF BEATTIE.

LIFE AND IMMORTALITY.

"O YE wild groves, oh! where is now your bloom?"
(The muse interprets thus his tender thought)
Your flowers, your verdure, and your balmy gloom,
Of late so grateful in the hour of drought?
Why do the birds, that song and rapture brought
To all your bowers, their mansions now forsake?
Ah! why has fickle chance this ruin wrought?
For now the storm howls mournful through the brake,
And the dead foilage flies in many a shapeless flake.

Where now the rill, melodious, pure, and cool,
And meads, with life, and mirth, and beauty crown'd?
Ah! see, the unsightly slime, and sluggish pool,
Have all the solitary vale embrown'd;
Fled each fair form, and mute each melting sound,
The raven croaks forlorn on naked spray:
And, hark! the river, bursting every mound,
Down the vale thunders, and with wasteful sway,
Uproots the grove, and rolls the shatter'd rocks away.

Yet such the destiny of all on earth:
So flourishes and fades majestic man.
Fair is the bud his vernal morn brings forth,
And fostering gales a while the nursling fan.
Oh, smile, ye heavens, serene; ye mildews wan;
Ye blighting whirlwinds, spare his balmy prime,
Nor lessen of his life the little span!
Borne on the swift, though silent wings of time,
Old age comes on apace to ravage all the clime.

And be it so. Let those deplore their doom
Whose hope still grovels in this dark sojourn;
But lofty souls, who look beyond the tomb,
Can smile at fate, and wonder how they mourn.
Shall spring to these sad scenes no more return?
Is yonder wave the sun's eternal bed?
Soon shall the orient with new lustre burn,
And spring shall soon her vital influence shed,
Again attune the grove, again adorn the mead.

"Shall I be left forgotten in the dust,
 When fate, relenting, lets the flower revive?
 Shall nature's voice, to man alone unjust,
 Bid him, though doom'd to perish, hope to live?
 Is it for this fair virtue oft must strive
 With disappointment, penury, and pain?"
 No: heaven's immortal spring shall yet arrive,
 And man's majestic beauty bloom again,
 Bright through the eternal year of love's triumphant reign.

HOPE BEYOND THE GRAVE.

'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more :
 I mourn, but, ye woodlands ! I mourn not for you ;
 For morn is approaching, your charms to restore,
 Perfumed with fresh fragrance and glittering with dew.
 Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn ;
 Kind nature the embryo blossom will save,
 But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn ?
 Or when shall it dawn on the night of the grave ?

'Twas thus, by the glare of false science betray'd,
 That leads, to bewilder ; and dazzles, to blind ; -
 My thoughts wont to roam, from shade onward to shade,
 Destruction before me, and sorrow behind.
 Oh pity, great Father of light ! then I cried,
 Thy creature, who fain would not wander from Thee ;
 Lo, humbled in dust, I relinquish my pride :
 From doubt and from darkness Thou only canst free.

And darkness and doubt are now flying away,
 No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn,
 So breaks on the traveller, faint, and astray,
 The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.
 See Truth, Love, and Mercy in triumph descending,
 And Nature all glowing in Eden's first bloom !
 On the cold cheek of Death smiles and roses are blending,
 And beauty immortal awakes from the tomb.

THE GOOD ALONE ARE GREAT.

WHEN winds the mountain oak assail,
 And lay its glories waste,
 Content may slumber in the vale,
 Unconscious of the blast.
 Through scenes of tumult while we roam.
 The heart, alas ! is ne'er at home ;

It hopes in time to roam no more :
 The mariner, not vainly brave,
 Combats the storm, and rides the wave,
 To rest at last on shore.

Ye proud, ye selfish, ye severe,
 How vain your mask of state !
 The good alone have joys sincere,
 The good alone are great :
 Great, when amid the vale of peace,
 They bid the plaint of sorrow cease,
 And hear the voice of artless praise :
 As when along the trophied plain
 Sublime they lead the victor train,
 While shouting nations gaze.

THE PEASANT'S EVENING SONG AFTER HIS TOIL.

Now the sun is westering down,
 And our toil is nearly done ;
 When the caller gloamin' comes,
 We will seek our cottage homes ;
 There our weary limbs we'll lay
 On our bed of rest till day ;
 Soft and still shall be our sleep,
 Under midnight shadows deep.

Our good angel from on high,
 There shall watch us with his eye.
 Though with toil our sinews slack,
 Morning brings their vigour back.
 Love and mercy at our side,
 Sorrows we may well abide.
 Tender ties our life endears,
 Overcoming grief and fears.

Ere the morning sun shall rise
 Glorious in the eastern skies,
 Wandering forth in love and joy,
 To our rude but loved employ ;
 Grateful for our happy days,
 We our morning song shall raise ;
 Telling to the east and west
 How the sons of toil are bless'd.

EDWIN, THE YOUNG POET.

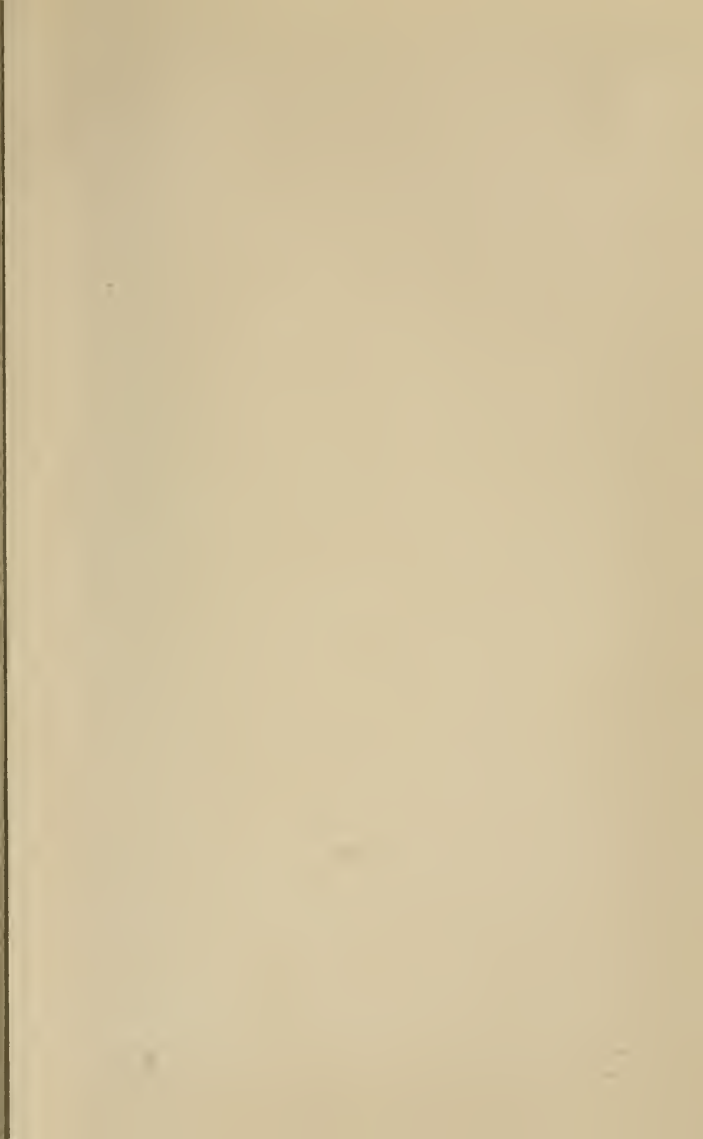
Lo ! where the stripling, wrapt in wonder, roves
 Beneath the precipice o'erhung with pine ;

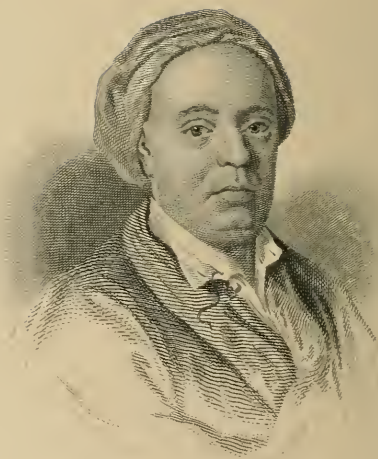
And sees, on high, amidst th' encircling groves
 From cliff to cliff the foaming torrents shine ;
 While waters, woods, and winds, in concert join,
 And echo swells the chorus to the skies.
 Would Edwin this majestic scene resign
 For aught the huntsman's puny craft supplies ?
 Ah, no ! he better knows great nature's charms to prize.

And oft he traced the uplands to survey,
 When o'er the sky advanced the kindling dawn,
 The crimson cloud, blue main, and mountain gray,
 And lake, dim-gleaming on the smoky lawn :
 Far to the west the long, long vale withdrawn,
 Where twilight loves to linger for a while ;
 And now he faintly kens the bounding fawn,
 And villager abroad at early toil ;
 But, lo ! the sun appears ! and heaven, earth, ocean smile.

And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb,
 When all in mist the world below was lost —
 What dreadful pleasure ! there to stand sublime,
 Like shipwreck'd mariner on desert coast,
 And view th' enormous waste of vapour, tost
 In billows, lengthening to th' horizon round,
 Now scoop'd in gulfs, with mountains now emboss'd ;
 And hear the voice of mirth and song rebound,
 Flocks, herds, and waterfalls, along the hoar profound !

In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,
 Fond of each gentle and each dreadful scene.
 In darkness and in storm he found delight ;
 Nor less than when an ocean-wave serene,
 The southern sun diffused his dazzling sheen.
 Ev'n sad vicissitude amused his soul ;
 And if a sigh would sometimes intervene,
 And down his cheek a tear of pity roll,
 A sigh, a tear, so sweet, he wish'd not to control.





James Thomson

THOMSON.

THE life of the Poet of the Seasons is a simple record of the uneventful career of a student and man of letters of the eighteenth century. It contains few occurrences which claim the ear of the public; is embellished by few incidents to distinguish the poet from scores of his fellows; and there are even few anecdotes extant to serve—which anecdotes sometimes do—as windows through which we can look into the character and inner nature of the man. A Scottish student of theology, whom a taste for poetry sends to London, as the sphere where his capacity might win for him solid rewards of praise and pudding, he lived there quietly for about a quarter of a century, gained considerable fame during his life, produced some compositions which have taken a place among our English classics, and which the world will not readily let die; and himself died at the comparatively early age of forty-eight, deeply lamented by a wide circle of private friends and acquaintances. A man of unaffected simplicity of manners, and of good, easy disposition—retiring, unostentatious, and affectionate—he had an eye for the beauties of natural scenery, and was thus able to write poems that are the delight of early youth, and of which old age does not grow weary.

James Thomson was born at Ednam, a small village on the banks of the Tweed, not far from the picturesque little town of Kelso, on the 11th September 1700. His father was minister of the parish, and from all accounts was a man

of excellent character, though more remarkable for his simple piety and general usefulness in his own sphere of labour, than for any particular grasp or brilliance of intellect. He was—through whose influence does not appear—ordained to Ednam in July 1692, and in November 1700, shortly after the birth of the poet, removed to Southdean, or Sudden, near Jedburgh, a larger parish than Ednam, where he ministered till his death, in 1718. Thomson's mother was evidently more remarkable in nature and character than his father. She was the daughter and co-heiress of a Mr Trotter of Fogo, a village in Berwickshire, about four miles from Dunse. Her Christian name was Beatrix; and Murdoch—the friend, and afterwards the biographer, of the poet—who knew her personally, speaks of her in terms of hearty praise, as “a person of uncommon natural endowments; possessed of every social and domestic virtue, with an imagination for vivacity and warmth scarce inferior to that of her son, and which raised her devotional exercises to a pitch bordering on enthusiasm.” Thus in the case of Thomson, as in so many others, we trace the character of the mother in the gifted son. Both parents were evidently connected with people of good repute, and moved in the middle ranks of life; though there is no ground for praising the “blood” and pedigree of the poet, as some of his biographers incline to do. He was born and bred in a respectable social position; and his parents by birth and training belonged to the middle ranks. More we cannot say.

The Rev. Thomas Thomson and Miss Beatrix Trotter were married at Ednam in October 1693, and were in due season blessed with a family of nine children—four sons and five daughters—of whom James was the third son and fourth child. His early years were spent at the manse of Southdean, amid scenes of natural loveliness, which were the fit nurse for a poetic child. The nature of the landscape differed considerably from the quiet cultivated beauty around Ednam, being altogether of a more stern and rugged character. The

neighbouring hills, adorned by clusters of their native heather, and the retired loneliness of the spot, rendered it quite a romantic district. Allan Cunningham speaks of it as "lovely with its green hills, and its blooming heather, while the slender stream of the 'crystal Jed' winding through the whole, adds a look of life, by its moving waters, to the upland solitude." There was abundance of food here to feed the poetic nature of the youth, and to store his mind with those images of rural grace and grandeur which in after-years were to be so happily portrayed; while old traditions in abundance lingered in the district, and many of its scenes were knit to Scottish song, which would deepen the impression made by them on the susceptible mind of young Thomson.

In due time (about 1712, it is supposed) 'the young bard was sent to school at Jedburgh, and there showed no signs of any natural quickness of intellect—did not at all appear what in Scotland is called a lad "of parts." An anecdote, illustrative of his character at this time, has been handed down, in which we are told that as the poor youth was one day vexing his soul over Latin and Greek, he was overheard by his teacher to exclaim, "Confound the Tower of Babel!" In reply to the inquiry what he meant, James ingeniously explained that "if it were not for the Tower of Babel there would be no languages to learn."

While in Jedburgh he was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of several friends who were useful to him in after-life. The earliest of these, and who is said to have first discerned the buddings of his poetic genius, was the Rev Robert Riccaltoun, parish minister of Hobkirk, near Jedburgh. Himself possessed of literary tastes and capacity, he became fond of Thomson, and undertook, with the consent of his father, to superintend his studies at the Jedburgh Grammar School. By this time the young poet had written many scraps of verse, which attracted the notice of several of the gentry of the neighbourhood, and laid the foundation

of a poetical reputation. Among his patrons at this early period we find Lord Cranstoun, Sir William Bennet of Chesters, and Sir Gilbert Elliot of Minto, at whose residence young Thomson spent some of his vacations. It is natural to suppose that the most of these early poems, like compositions by boys of fourteen or fifteen generally, were little worth; though one of them, written at the age of fourteen, which has been preserved, shows no inconsiderable powers of thought, fancy, and expression, for one so young. However, with a cautious prudence thoroughly Scotch, young Thomson made a solemn bonfire every New Year's day of all he had written during the preceding twelve months, signalling the sacrifice by some mock-judicial verses, in which he narrated the grounds on which he condemned each composition to destruction. After he had spent three years at Jedburgh Grammar School, James was sent to Edinburgh to attend college, with a view to preparation for the work of the ministry. His poetical reputation accompanied him to the Scottish capital, and was the means of gaining for him at the outset the friendship of David Mallet (or Malloch) and of Patrick Murdoch, his biographer. His companions generally seem to have held him in light estimation: by many of them he was regarded as "a dull fellow," and was even made the butt of their jests. The poet had been about three years in Edinburgh, when he sustained the first great trial of his life. His father died, and in circumstances so peculiar, and with such suddenness, as must have deepened and embittered the natural grief of the young student. He had not even the sad consolation of seeing him before his death, and all he could do on hastening to Southdean was to lay the honoured head of his father in the Southdean kirkyard, and erect a stone to mark the spot where lay the remains of "the Rev. Thomas Thomson, a holy man of God."

His father's death altered the position of the family. Though not reduced to actual want—for Mrs Thomson had the moiety of the farm of Widehope in Roxburghshire—

there was little left to support them. She brought her family to Edinburgh, resolved to complete the education of James by strict economy. Shortly after, James began his divinity studies, and continued to perform the exercises prescribed by the course for five years, or until March 1724. His friends and companions at this period were John Wilson—"Mass John," as he called him afterwards—Cranston, and Murdoch, all three divinity students, and all of whom afterwards became pastors, and David Mallet. Thomson and Mallet were both fond of literature: they were about the same age, and both were poor. Their circumstances and tastes, therefore, drew them together, and founded a friendship which lasted through Thomson's life. Mallet was then even poorer than Thomson, and to eke out a scanty livelihood he became janitor to the High School of Edinburgh. He was the son of a Highlander of the Clan Macgregor, who kept a small public-house in the Highlands. He survived Thomson some sixteen years; and though his start in life was the more unfavourable of the two, he soon outstripped his friend in the race after fortune. More cautious, prudent, and persevering, he was, all through life, ever ready to take advantage of the "tide in his affairs," which, through sheer indolence and easiness of disposition, Thomson often neglected.

Thomson's experiences during his divinity studies do not seem to have stimulated him to enthusiasm for his profession. An anecdote relative to this period is extant. He had prepared as an exercise a paraphrase on the 119th Psalm for the class under the professorial care of Mr Hamilton. The paraphrase was duly brought under the notice of the Professor; but, says Johnson, Thomson's "diction was so poetically splendid that Hamilton reproved him for speaking language unintelligible to a popular audience; and he censured one of his expressions as indecent, if not profane." There is reason for believing that this version of the story is not correct—there is at least no evidence of the truth of the

last remark. In all probability the Professor only administered a good-natured advice, as Murdoch indeed tells us, not to allow his imagination to run riot, and to study to develop that simplicity of expression and those solidier theological qualities required for successful ministration to a Scotch Presbyterian congregation. At the same time, the supposition is very probable that this semi-rebuke had some influence in turning the attention of Thomson from theological study to the lighter culture of the Muses. Eager to follow up this inclination, it was only natural that his thoughts should run on a London literary career. Then, as now, London was the great literary centre to which ambitious young men of literary tastes turned a longing eye. At that time, besides, Edinburgh offered few inducements to a man of letters to choose it for his residence. The spirit of Calvinism possessed the capital sufficiently to make the playhouse an abomination, and the culture of the poetic faculty at least a suspicious pursuit; so that a student having tastes such as Thomson's could have slight hopes of being "called" to a parish. Despite the objections of friends, who did not discern Thomson's genius—though their eyes were open to petty faults of style and diction—he left Edinburgh, encouraged, it is believed, by his excellent mother and by a London friend of hers, Lady Grizel Baillie, daughter of Sir Patrick Hume, afterwards Earl of Marchmont, and wife of George Baillie of Jerviswoode. Several of the poet's biographers assert that Thomson gained nothing by the patronage of this aristocratic lady, which, as we shall see, is a mistake. He was perhaps further encouraged to seek his fortune in London by the approval of a paraphrase of his on the 104th Psalm by Mr Auditor Benson, who was so taken by the composition, that he said Thomson would be sure of recognition and reward if he came to the metropolis. Thomson went to London, accordingly, in the March or August of 1725—the exact month being matter of dispute among his biographers. He carried a very slender stock of money with him, but was well recom-

mended in letters of introduction to persons of influence, both social and literary. The chief foundation of his hopes for the future rested on his poem of *Winter*, the MS. of which he carried with him. Unfortunately, scarcely had he arrived in the metropolis than he was by an accident subjected to grave perplexity. Strolling along the thronged streets of the capital with the eager curiosity of a stranger from the country, he omitted to keep watch over his pockets. He was hastening along to visit his friend Mallet, at the house of the Duke of Montrose, in Hanover Square, where Mallet was engaged as tutor, when a clever pickpocket abstracted his bundle of letters, which were bound up in a handkerchief. Happily for him, all his letters had not been placed in this bundle; for we find him afterwards presenting some of them to their addresses. The loss, however, to one who had come to London so slenderly provided with cash, was serious.

It does not appear how much or how little of *Winter* was written before the poet left Scotland; but certainly it was not completed, as we find from a letter written this year to his friend Cranston. In this letter he traces the origin of his poem to a short one of Riccarton's, which, though not composed in a very finished style, contains some powerful descriptive verses. While working at *Winter*, which had been written first in mere individual scenes, that were combined, at the suggestion of Mallet, into a continuous whole, and while struggling with poverty, and chagrined by the loss of his letters, another grievous misfortune overtook him. His mother, to whom he was deeply attached, died at Leith only a few weeks after parting from her son. The loss was a heavy blow to the tender and affectionate nature of the poet, who in some verses, written on the sad occasion, expressed how painfully the bereavement preyed upon his mind. But that religion, whose early lessons he had imbibed at the manse of Southdean, from her whom he now mourned, enabled him to bear his loss with Christian piety and resignation.

After he had been some weeks in London, he was appointed tutor to a son of Lord Binning. This appointment was made at the instance of Lady Grizel Baillie, his mother's old friend, though by Allan Cunningham it is erroneously stated that he owed it to Mallet. Thomson's pupil was a boy five years old, who resided with his father near East Barnet, a place about ten miles from London. However the poet might afterwards laud the "delightful task" of "teaching the young idea how to shoot," he certainly, in this case, found it very irksome work. Perhaps it was this, combined with the solemnising effect produced on his mind by his mother's death, which led him again to turn his thoughts, as at this time he did, to his old project of the ministry. So little did the "delightful task," at all events, agree with Thomson's tastes, that he remained only a few months at East Barnet, though he continued to hover about the neighbourhood, and felt there some of the bitterness of poverty. To relieve his perplexities, he applied to Cranston for a loan of £12 until he could realise his share of the proceeds of the sale of his mother's property of Widehope.

Winter was at length finished, and the poet lost no time in seeking a publisher. He had some difficulty in finding one, but at last induced Millan, a publisher in Charing Cross—to whose house the poet had removed shortly before, on leaving East Barnet—to purchase the poem at the low rate of three guineas. Even this sum, trifling as it was, must have appeared too much for the publisher; for the poem could get no readers. A mere chance brought it into public notice. The Rev. Mr Whatley, afterwards prebendary of York, being, according to Johnson's account, one day in Millan's shop, happened to take up the poem, and was so much pleased with what he read, that he immediately began to sound the praises of the author through the various coffee-houses of London. However it came about, Thomson was declared a poet, and his fame was proclaimed over the metropolis. He gained, at the same time, the friendship of Mr

Aaron Hill, a well-known dabbler in literature in these days—immortalised in Pope's *Dunciad*—who proceeded to denounce in indignant terms the neglect of poor poets by the rich. His declamation drew the attention of Sir Spencer Compton, then Speaker of the House of Commons, and afterwards Earl of Wilmington, to whom Thomson had dedicated the first edition of *Winter*. The result was an invitation from the Speaker, who had probably been ignorant of the poet's existence till then, to Thomson to visit him. Thomson accepted the invitation, was kindly received, and was rewarded by a present of twenty guineas—a God-send to him in his circumstances. It is painful to remark the fulsome adulation lavished at this time by the poet on Hill. The strain in which the notice taken of *Winter* by the latter was acknowledged is in terms of abject “lick-spittleism.” After an interview with Hill, he wrote, saying that “to descend from his company and mingle with the herd of mankind, was like Nebuchadnezzar's descending from his throne, to graze with the beasts of the field.” In judging of this episode, it is only fair to recall the relations which then unhappily subsisted between patrons and poets. The literary class indulged in such grovelling flattery of their patrons as is disgusting and humiliating to every feeling of manly independence. It was the custom of the country and the age, and Thomson's excuse is that he only acted according to the common practice. At the same time, adulation of Mr Aaron Hill from James Thomson now seems peculiarly painful.

After *Winter* had thus been brought into public notice, it speedily grew in popularity, and soon became a general favourite. So rapid was this growth, that before the year was out two new editions had been called for. While the second edition was in progress, Thomson obtained a situation as tutor to a pupil in Watt's Academy in Little Tower Street; but his residence there was of short duration. Fortunately for him, he did not stand in such extreme need of a situation of this kind as he once did. The success and popu-

larity of *Winter* had brought him literary reputation, and surrounded him with a bodyguard of friends. Among these was Duncan Forbes of Culloden, who, it is supposed, was of some use to the poet in a literary way, having aided him "in taming down his language a little." Aikman, the painter, on whose death Thomson wrote a few affectionate verses, and Graham of Montrose, were also among his friends. The ladies, too, enrolled themselves as his patronesses; and amongst them we find Mrs Stanley—also mentioned in Thomson's poems—Miss Drelincourt, daughter of the Dean of Armagh—"a beauty and a wit, who," says Allan Cunningham, "at once looked and taught him into reputation"—and the Countess of Hertford. "The most influential friendship he formed at this period," writes Mr Robert Bell, "was that of Dr Rundle, afterwards Bishop of Derry, by whom he was introduced to Sir Charles Talbot, who became Lord Chancellor a few years afterwards." The poet's worldly position was improved through these new acquaintances; but he still remained poor. He found, as many others have done, that praise without solid pudding is far from satisfying. The profits from the sale even of three editions of so small a poem as *Winter* were slight; and though the sale of *Widehope* had brought him a little temporary help, he was still in straits from want of money. He left Watt's Academy in October 1726, after having been only some five months there. The friendship with Hill seems, like that with Mallet, to have continued throughout the poet's life; and this same year (1726) he became acquainted with the unhappy Richard Savage. Through Mallet, Thomson came also to know Pope: but this friendship does not appear to have ever been very cordial, at least on the side of Pope. Arbuthnot and Gay are also numbered among the friends of this period.

The following year (1727) *Summer* was given to the world, and appeared dedicated to the well-known Bub Dodington, afterwards Lord Melcombe. Thomson first proposed to dedicate *Summer* to his former patron, Lord Binning; but that

nobleman induced him, out of regard to Thomson's personal interests, to transfer the honour to Dodington, as more likely to be of service to the poet. The same year were published the verses on the memory of Sir Isaac Newton, which were dedicated to Sir Robert Walpole.

Thomson's next literary venture was *Spring*, which was published in 1728, and dedicated to the Countess of Hertford, at whose residence it was written. This lady was fond of the company of literary men, was herself a writer of verses, and was in the habit, according to Johnson, of inviting some poet to the country every summer, for the purpose of helping her in her studies. She consequently took a lively interest in the fortunes of the literary class; and Thomson was on one occasion honoured with an invitation to her country seat. If we may trust Johnson's account, however, he lost her friendship by his own imprudence. During his visit he took more pleasure in the delights of the table, and in the enjoyment of convivialities with her lord, than in the literary enterprises of her ladyship; and the result was, that the poet was not again asked to share her hospitalities.

Thomson was by this time a recognised member of the literary society of London, and was acknowledged to be one of the foremost poets of the day. His name alone, therefore, insured the attention of the literary public to whatever he produced. His poem *Britannia*, published in 1729, is the best proof of this assertion. It consisted of an invective against the Government of the day, because it had not re-sented depredations by the Spaniards upon British merchantmen. Its success even for a short time can only be attributed to the poet's reputation; and it is well for that reputation now that it is read by so few. It must fatigue the most indulgent critic and the warmest admirer of Thomson even to read this dreary production.

In 1730, Milan, the publisher, reprinted *Britannia*, in order, it is supposed, to suit the quarto edition of *The Seasons*, published this year by subscription. The project of

a subscription copy had been ventured by Thomson in 1728—the main object being to put money into his exhausted exchequer. In addition to the fourth of the series of *The Seasons*, *Autumn*, which appeared dedicated to Mr Speaker Onslow, an essay on descriptive poetry was promised to conclude the volume. This essay never appeared, and some suppose that it was never even written. The work was closed with the magnificent hymn which is perhaps the finest production of Thomson's pen, and included the poem on the memory of Sir Isaac Newton. The number of subscribers to this edition, which appeared in a handsome quarto volume, was 387, who took 454 copies in all. Among the subscribers were some of the foremost men of letters of the period, as well as numerous persons of high social rank. Pope took three copies; Duncan Forbes, five; Dodington, twenty; Patrick Lindsay, Provost of Edinburgh, ten; and Lady Walpole, two. In five years Thomson had travelled high up the hill of fame, and now stood at the top, numbering among his friends and patrons the best wits of the day, the most famous poets, and the most distinguished members of society.

The year before the publication of the collected *Seasons*, Thomson began to dig at a new mine of literary labour, deeming that the theatre would bring larger rewards than poetry. He had, indeed, received fifty guineas for *Spring*; but the entire profits from his poems cannot have been great, and it is not surprising that he bethought him of the drama. Accordingly, he composed the tragedy of *Sophonisba*, which was put upon the stage in February 1729-30. This tragedy was dedicated to the Queen, and Johnson says that "it raised such expectations that every rehearsal was dignified with a splendid audience, collected to anticipate the delight that was preparing for the public." When it did appear it was far from sustaining the expectations which had been raised. Johnson tells us that "nobody was much affected, and the public rose as from a moral lecture." Notwithstanding, the

play had considerable success; and during 1730 it ran through no fewer than four editions. Whatever might have been the measure of contemporary success, or the rewards in cash pocketed by the author, *Sophonisba* has not added to Thomson's reputation. Fortunately few read it now-a-days, and the loss is not to be regretted. The chief thing held in remembrance about it now is the line—

“O, Sophonisba! Sophonisba, O!”

parodied by a London wag of the period—

“O, Jemmy Thomson! Jemmy Thomson, O!”

“which for a while,” says Johnson, “echoed through the town.” The first lines of the prologue to the tragedy were written by Pope, and the closing lines by Mallet—Pope having declined to complete what he had commenced.

The following year Thomson gained an excellent situation—one altogether agreeable to his personal tastes—through the influence of the Rev. Dr Rundle, who was afterwards accused of heresy, and was defended from the charge by Thomson. The situation was that of travelling companion to Mr Charles Talbot, a young man of four-and-twenty, the son of Sir Charles, afterwards Lord Chancellor Talbot. In 1731 the two set out for the Continent, and together visited the principal towns in France, Switzerland, and Italy. This opportunity of travelling and enjoying life in a pleasant, easy manner, was well suited to the naturally indolent disposition of the poet; and the novelties with which he came in contact stored his mind with abundant poetical pabulum. While travelling, and in view of the degradation to which the inhabitants of France and Italy, formerly the home of freedom, were subjected, Thomson conceived the first idea of his poem on *Liberty*. What he saw on the Continent made him cherish more deeply the freedom and privileges enjoyed in Britain. The poem which thus originated was designed by Thomson to be his masterpiece. All his know-

ledge was ransacked to obtain appropriate illusions, and his stock of learning exhausted for suitable illustrations. He sought to paint the effects of Liberty on the different countries where she had made her home, to trace her influence on art and life, to show how Grecian sculpture owed its happiest inspirations, Roman heroes their most devoted daring, Italian artists their finest paintings, and England her noblest poetry, to her breath. We think, however, with Johnson—whose verdict, though he confessed he never read the poem, will be accepted by most who do—that *Liberty* is wearisome in the extreme. Though the poet spent two years over its composition, and esteemed it when completed his best work, “*Liberty* called in vain upon her votaries to read her praises and reward her encomiast; her praises were condemned to harbour spiders and to gather dust: none of Thomson’s performances were so little regarded.”

The continental tour with young Talbot lasted about a year, the travellers returning to England at the close of 1731. Back once more to London, Thomson set diligently to work upon *Liberty*, and while engaged with the first book his former fellow-traveller fell ill, and died in September 1733. His death was lamented by the poet in a few verses, which show the warmth of his affection better than the felicity of his muse. Two months afterwards Talbot’s father was raised to the Lord Chancellorship, and one of his first acts was to reward Thomson’s esteem and love for his late son by appointing him to the sinecure office of Secretary of Briefs in the Court of Chancery. This timely act of patronage placed the poet in a position of comfort, and relieved him from dependence on the labours of his pen. No doubt he was hereby partially consoled for the entire failure, in a pecuniary aspect, of his poem on *Liberty*. The dedication to the Prince of Wales, and the extravagant laudation of Aaron Hill, alike failed to secure success; and it was the only one of his productions which can be said to have dropped still-born from the press. Considering its nature

and manner, this is far from surprising. It is a frigid, tiresome composition, full of platitudes strung laboriously together, and presented in blank verse, correct enough, but certainly uninspired, and embellished by images which by their frequency and sameness weary the reader. It is now read by very few, and those who, from regard to Thomson's reputation or out of curiosity, venture to glance at it are tempted to toss it aside with impatience. As it was considerably abridged by his friend Lyttelton, the first published edition must have been even more stale than the one we now read. A poor pun upon its non-success, made by a Ministerial writer of the period, has been preserved. Thomson, he said, "had taken a *Liberty*, which was not agreeable to *Britannia* in any *Season*."

The poet could now live in comparative ease and comfort. Murdoch says that his situation was "a place of little attendance, suiting his retired, indolent way of life, and equal to all his wants." One of the first advantages he enjoyed from it was a country residence; for in May 1736 he removed to Richmond, in order that he might indulge his natural love of a country life. He here occupied a cottage bordering on the Thames, which commanded an excellent view, and to which a small garden was attached, so that the poet was able to indulge his favourite taste for gardening. Here he revised and enlarged the *Seasons*, and carried them through three new editions, that appeared successively in 1738, 1744, and 1746. During his days of prosperity it is pleasing to find him manifesting the natural kindness of his affectionate disposition. His relatives in Scotland were possessed of but little of this world's goods. His two sisters, Jean and Elizabeth, had opened a small millinery shop in Edinburgh; and the poet settled an annuity of £16 on them, to be paid half-yearly; besides asking his friend Ross to advance £12, which he would repay, to help them with their shop. Immediately, too, after his appointment to the secretaryship, he invited his brother, an invalid, and unable to do anything for him-

self, to come and stay with him. The brother accordingly came to London, but found his health suffer by the change, and returned to Scotland, where he died soon afterwards.

In these same comfortable days he remembered also the fair Amanda, a young lady for whom he had long cherished an ardent affection. Amanda—celebrated in several of his songs—was a Miss Elizabeth Young, daughter of a Captain Gilbert Young, who resided with her mother at Gooliehill, on the banks of the Nith, in Dumfriesshire. Little, comparatively, is known about her, and we are ignorant when and where the poet became first enamoured of her. The fact of his attachment, and that it was deep and tender, cannot, however, be questioned. This passion exercised a powerful influence over his nature, and moulded his inner, more than any other event of his outer life. The two may have first met at the house of Miss Young's brother-in-law, Mr Robertson, at Richmond; and we have evidence that Thomson knew her sister, and James Robertson, her sister's husband, surgeon to the household at Kew, so early as 1726. Robertson then lived opposite the poet, in Lancaster Court in the Strand. He went to the East Indies afterwards, and was away from England for some years; but coming to live at Richmond on his return, the old intimacy was renewed, and continued uninterrupted till the poet's death in 1748. Letters exist addressed by the poet to Mrs Robertson, and one to Miss Young herself, written from Hagley, the seat of Lyttelton, where Thomson was in 1743 visiting his friend. In this letter he declares his passion. But in his case the course of true love neither ran smoothly nor ended happily; for Miss Young became the wife of Admiral Campbell. "Amanda," said Robertson, "was a fine sensible woman, and poor Thomson was desperately in love with her." Though Thomson pleaded poverty to his friends as his reason for not marrying, the fact that he actually did propose for the hand of Miss Young, as his own letter proves, reveals that this was a mere pretext. But the disappointment of his hopes

preyed heavily on him, and up to the last caused him many bitter hours. Robertson thought it afflicted him so much as to render him indifferent to life. "He seemed to me," he says, "desirous not to live, and I had reason to think that my sister-in-law was the occasion of this. He could not bear the thought of her being married to another." So that like the rest of mankind, poor, affectionate, simple-hearted Thomson had *his* skeleton of the closet. He, too, learned in suffering what he taught in song, and "by the death-blow of his hopes *her* memory immortal grew;" for Amanda is now only remembered on account of her relation to the poet, whose passion she at first favoured, and, it is to be feared, afterwards scorned for a wealthier suitor. She is remembered now as the idol of Thomson, and not as the wife of Admiral Campbell.

If the dawn of prosperity led the poet to indulge in dreams of love and matrimony, the dream was of short duration. His prosperity depended on the life of the Chancellor, and that kind patron died in February 1737. The death of his patron cost him his place; for which, from motives of indolence or pride, he omitted to apply to the new Chancellor, though the latter kept it open some time waiting such an application. Lord Hardwicke was probably no great admirer of poetry, and certainly was not generous enough to bestow an unsolicited favour, so he gave the appointment to another. Thus Thomson was again reduced to depend upon his pen for subsistence; and it is pleasing to remark that at the moment when poverty was knocking at his door, and disappointment preying on his mind, he did not forget the patron he had lost, to whose memory he devoted a poem of considerable merit. In the same poem he defended Dr Rundle, by whom he had been introduced to Talbot, from the charge of heresy. He immediately resumed his work, with such cheerfulness of temper as he could command and his circumstances would admit. His thoughts again turned to the theatre; where, in 1738, was acted his tragedy of *Agamemnon*, for which the

poet received what Murdoch calls "a good sum." As a drama it was not successful, nor did it deserve success; but the author was consoled by the sale, from which he derived considerable profits. It is, however, evident that he was about this time in embarrassed circumstances, and we may, as is generally done by his biographers, refer to the period shortly before this the story of Quin's generosity. Thomson had been arrested for a debt of seventy pounds, and conveyed to a spunging-house. While there he was, to his great surprise, visited by the actor, who provided a supper, which he had ordered from a neighbouring tavern. After the supper had been washed down by copious draughts of claret, the actor said it was time they should square accounts. With the apprehensiveness of a debtor, the poet became alarmed, though he was also surprised, not being aware of any cash transactions with Quin. His alarm soon yielded to a quite different feeling when the great actor declared himself *his* debtor. "When I read *The Seasons*," he said, "I was so delighted, that I put the poet down in my will for a hundred pounds; and you must allow me to pay it with my own hand." Before Thomson had time to remonstrate, the kind-hearted actor deposited the money on the table, and immediately withdrew. This bit of good luck was soon followed by another. Through Lyttelton, Thomson was introduced to the Prince of Wales, then anxious for popularity, and to be regarded as the Mæcenas of the day; and during an interview the Prince inquired of the poet as to the state of his affairs. The latter jocularly replied that "they were in a more poetical position than formerly;" on which his Royal Highness generously settled upon him a pension of £100 a year, which Thomson acknowledged soon afterwards by dedicating to the Prince the new tragedy of *Agamemnon*. We have already said that this tragedy, though great pains were bestowed on its composition, did not take the fancy of the public. Thomson attributed its failure to the remoteness from the period of the characters and incidents, and resolved

to choose for his next play a subject nearer home. He accordingly chose one from English history, and the following year *Edward and Eleanor* appeared, founded on an episode in the history of Edward I. of England. The author sought in this play to delineate the character of one of the most heroic of England's kings, and in the portrait of his Queen, Eleanor, to present a picture of a devoted wife and courageous woman. But it proved even a greater failure than *Agamemnon*. Its production on the stage was immediately forbidden by the Lord Chamberlain. About two years previously, Parliament had empowered the Lord Chamberlain to prohibit whatever appeared of a dangerous political complexion. Up till this time the *Gustavus Vasa* of Brooke had been the only play forbidden. The patronage bestowed on Thomson by the Prince of Wales, then in disfavour at Court, and in opposition to the Government, seems the only reason for the prohibition in his case; for the play contains nothing which the most scrupulous censor could interpret as disloyal. Thomson published it afterwards by subscription, appealing from the condemnation of the Lord Chamberlain to the judgment of the people, and dedicated it to the Princess of Wales. But the public, which had extensively patronised Brooke's prohibited *Gustavus*, were tired of this "Martyrdom under the Stage Act," and the response to his appeal was not adequate to Thomson's hopes and his friends' expectations.

The next work which occupied the poet was the composition of *The Masque of Alfred*, composed in conjunction with Mallet. It was written by command of the Prince of Wales in 1740, and was acted before him at Cliefden House. The same year Thomson wrote the preface for a new edition of Milton's *Areopagitica*. *The Masque of Alfred* contains the popular song *Rule Britannia*, which, with sufficient probability, is ascribed to Thomson rather than to Mallet, and is the only composition in the *Masque* now remembered, or deserving of remembrance. By the sale of his works, the poet obtained money enough to enable him, with his annual pension, to

live quietly in his cottage on the banks of the Thames, in the locality where he may have first known Amanda. Here he courted the retirement of rural life, his chief companions being his books, and for some years he preserved silence—a silence unbroken till 1745, when he produced on the stage *Tancred and Sigismunda*—the play which, by his critics, is justly considered his best, and which was also his most successful one. It was printed, and dedicated to the Prince of Wales. Garrick and Mrs Cibber played parts in it, and it soon became a public favourite, and drew crowded houses—a result doubtless due in great part to the fame of the actors.

Another gleam of sunshine had shortly before this brightened Thomson's circumstances. In 1744 Lyttelton came into power, and one of his first acts was to appoint the poet Surveyor-General of the Leeward Islands—the emoluments from which post were £300 a year. Like the secretaryship, this office was a sinecure. Thomson was thus reinstated in a comfortable position; and though in 1748 the Prince of Wales withdrew his pension, in consequence of a quarrel with Lyttelton, he had enough without it to support him in a style which, to a man of his simple tastes and inexpensive habits, was almost affluence. *The Seasons*, too, had become so popular, and their sale was so extensive, that he drew considerable profits from this source. He lived in these last years a good deal in the country—Hagley, the seat of Lyttelton, being a favorite resort.

The Castle of Indolence, the last of our poet's works published during his life, had long occupied his spare hours. From a statement made by himself, we learn that he had been working at it for fifteen years. It was composed with more care than any other of his works, and is the most finished production of his muse. Its origin, in the poet's fancy, dates back to his youthful days; and from a few disconnected stanzas, intended to ridicule the indolence of himself and some of his friends, it gradually grew into a poem of considerable size, and took form as an allegory. It is written

in the Spenserian stanza, and, especially the first of it, is a happy imitation of the style and spirit of the *Faëry Queen*. The first canto, of which Dr Johnson said that "it opens a scene of lazy luxury, which fills the imagination," is undoubtedly the best part of the poem. The whole was published in May 1748. About this period, too, he composed his last play, *Coriolanus*, which he did not live to see put upon the stage. It was performed in 1749, after his death, Lyttelton writing the prologue, which was spoken by Quin, who was affected almost to tears. A considerable sum was realised by *Coriolanus*—a sum sufficient to pay all Thomson's outstanding debts, and to leave over a balance, which was remitted to his sisters. The poet died in the August of 1748, only six months or so after the shabby withdrawal of his pension by the Prince of Wales. His death was the result of a cold, caught through careless exposure on the river. Subsequently aggravated by further exposure before he had quite recovered, it brought on a fever, which proved incurable. He generally walked between Richmond and London when he visited the metropolis, picking up any acquaintance he could find on the way, and chatting, or even dining, *en route*. One evening, in the summer of 1748, he walked as usual from town to Hammersmith, and being alone, overheated and tired himself by the sharp exercise. In this state he took the boat for Kew. The night air on the river induced a chill, which brought on a severe cold, and next day he was in a high fever. From this attack he partially recovered, but imprudently ventured out before the cure was complete; and, tempted by a fine summer evening, again exposed himself to the night air. The consequence was a relapse. Medical attendance was obtained from London, but was of no avail. A malignant nervous fever set in, and defied all the skill of the physician. Thomson expired at four o'clock on the morning of Saturday, 27th August 1748, just a fortnight before completing his forty-eighth year. His death was a severe blow to a large circle

of friends. Collins, the poet, who resided in the neighbourhood, left Richmond, to which he never returned, so deeply was he affected by the loss of his friend. His medical attendant, Dr Armstrong of London, wrote:—"This blow makes a hideous gap: and the loss of such an agreeable friend turns some of the sweetest scenes in England into something waste and desolate, at least for the time. It will be so for a long time with me; for I question if ever I shall be able to see Richmond again without sorrow and mortification." Murdoch, his old friend and biographer, says:—"We have lost our old, tried, amiable, open, and honest-hearted Thomson, whom we never parted from but unwillingly, and never met but with fresh transport; in whom we found ever the same delightful companion, the same faithful depository of our inmost thoughts, and the same sensible sympathising adviser." Such is the testimony to Thomson's nature and character by those who knew him most intimately.

The poet's remains were buried in Richmond Church, and his funeral was attended by Robertson, Quin, Mallet, and another, supposed to have been Mitchell. No memorial except a plain stone was erected over the spot until 1792, when the Earl of Buchan placed a tablet there bearing an inscription. Several of Thomson's friends, including Lyttelton and Robertson, wrote lamenting him in terms equally affectionate with those of Armstrong and Murdoch, which we have just quoted. Never was a man mourned more sincerely; for all his friends felt they had lost one whose place in their affections would never be again filled. His publisher, Millan, marked his esteem for his memory by devoting the profits of a splendid edition of his works to the erection of a monument in Westminster Abbey, which is placed between the monuments to Shakspeare and Rowe. A simple, if not very elegant obelisk, stands at Ednam, the poet's birthplace. It was erected by the inhabitants of the district; and on the same spot the Earl of Buchan crowned *The Seasons*. For the occasion a few memorial verses were written by

Burns, expressing his admiration of the sweet poet of the Seasons.

In youth Thomson was considered handsome, though he retained few traces of that quality in later years. His figure became stout and ungainly, and entirely lost any gracefulness it might formerly have had, making him, as he paints himself in his *Castle of Indolence*, "more fat than bard be-seems." "His worst appearance," says Murdoch, "was when you saw him walking alone in a thoughtful mood; but let a friend accost him, and enter into conversation, he would instantly brighten into a most amiable aspect, his features no longer the same, and his eye darting a peculiar animated fire. The case was much alike in company; when, if it was mixed or very numerous, he made but an indifferent figure; but with a few select friends he was open, sprightly, and entertaining." In his character, easy and somewhat indolent good-nature was combined with unaffected simplicity of heart and genial kindness of disposition. His writings show his patriotism and tenderness of feeling, which extended even to the brute creation, as well as his religious devoutness and love of his friends. "He is not, indeed, known, through his whole life, to have given any person one moment's pain, by his writings or otherwise." Though not eminent as a scholar, his general acquirements were extensive, and his classical attainments were more than respectable. His favourite season for composition was autumn, and midnight was the time he generally chose for his poetical studies.

The limits of our space prevent us entering upon any very minute criticism of the genius and works of Thomson. Nor is this needful. Thomson's place in English literature has been long ago fixed, and criticism of his poems must in great degree be mere repetition of what others have written. A few words may, however, be profitable.

From the time of the Restoration, English literature had been corrupted by a continental spirit and style, which im-

parted a thoroughly French character to most of the productions of the period. Nature was sacrificed to foreign artificialities; which, though adorned by the genius of Pope, took no deep hold on the affections of the English people. The wits and poets of Queen Anne's reign, even though Pope and Addison were among the number, never affected the real heart of the nation. Thomson was the first poet of eminence who rebelled against the artificial importations from the continent, and strove, we believe in part unconsciously, to bring literature back to a purer style, and to imbue it with a spirit closer to nature. The fact that he was educated in Scotland, outside the literary circles of the time, and that he spent so many years of his life in quiet rural retirement, had much, doubtless, to do with this. Though we must admit that, as the poet of Nature, he is inferior to his successor, Cowper; though the pomp of his diction, and the clumsiness of many of his lines contrast forcibly with the simple, chaste, severe truthfulness of the former, yet the pleasing flow of rural poesy which his works contain must always be a source of pleasure to his readers. Campbell has remarked, with great justice, that "Thomson seems to contemplate the creation with an eye of unqualified pleasure and ecstasy, and to love its inhabitants with a lofty and hallowed feeling of religious happiness. Cowper has also his philanthropy, but it is dashed with religious terrors, and with themes of satire, regret, and reprehension. . . . His touches cannot be more faithful than Cowper's, but they are more soft and select, and less disturbed by the intrusion of homely subjects." This fidelity to nature, together with his good-natured philanthropy, devout religiousness, and an animated flow of felicitous pictures of natural scenes and objects, have made Thomson a universal favourite with both old and young, notwithstanding his pomposity, and an occasional intrusion almost of vulgarity.

These remarks are applicable to *The Seasons* alone. A fresh naturalness of spirit, and much closeness and accuracy

of observation, are there very notable. The poet's joy in contemplating nature wells up spontaneously from the poet's heart; and he exults with glad satisfaction in the fresh loveliness of spring—in the swelling buds, the springing corn, and the warbling birds. A genial benevolence of nature, and a simplicity of devout feeling, accompany and give sweeter and deeper tone to his joyousness. The digressions so freely introduced into *The Seasons*—the many narratives and stories, often very distantly, sometimes not at all, connected with the subject on hand—may tend to relieve the tedium of mere description; but as poetry most of them are poor. The popularity of these poems is manifest from the fact that they are universally read. They please and satisfy the simple tastes of youth, and the impressions then produced are not uprooted, even if at a later period of life we contemplate them with a more fastidious and critical eye. Many turns of expression, and not a few individual lines in them, have, too, almost become part and parcel of the English language. It is altogether a mistake, however, to say of Thomson, as Dr Craik does in his *History of English Literature*, that he “is all negligence and nature; so negligent, indeed,” he proceeds, “that he pours forth his unpremeditated song apparently without the thought ever occurring to him that he could improve it by any study or elaboration, any more than if he were some winged warbler of the woodlands, seeking and caring for no other listener except the universal air which the strain made vocal.” On the contrary, a comparison of his early poems with his later, and of the earlier editions of *The Seasons* with those published afterwards, demonstrate that Thomson wrought at and polished his verse most laboriously. His later style was a plant of slow growth, and we find in his early compositions only the rudiments of what it became subsequently. The numerous corrections of style, construction, and even grammar, discovered through such a comparison, manifest how gradually, and with how much premeditation, the poet's style was actually formed. Of that

style, as seen in his best poems, we are warranted in speaking in terms of high commendation. His blank verse is altogether peculiar to himself, being quite unlike that of any of his predecessors. "His numbers, his pauses, his diction," says Johnson, "are of his own growth, without transcription, without meditation." And his thoughts are for the most part as much his own as his mode of expression. He looked at nature with his own eyes ; and his descriptions, therefore, not only convey admirable general pictures, but are faithful in the minutest particulars and most trifling details. Any errors in his illustrations occur only when he seeks these in regions of which he is ignorant—as, for instance, in scientific allusions.

It is as a descriptive poet that Thomson has taken, and will always retain, his high position. Some of the descriptive passages in *The Seasons* are inimitable : as, for example, that in which he depicts "the general hush and expectation that pervade inanimate nature," on the approach of spring—the vivid picture of the coming tempest in summer—the forceful depiction of the man perishing in the winter snow—and the beautiful description of the shower in the woods. Thomson's faults are, however, also numerous. His diction, as we have already said, is frequently pompous, cumbrous, and too luxuriant. His very excellencies—the absence of artificiality, and the presence of a spontaneous nature-spirit—often betray him into the appearance of negligence, carelessness, and redundancy. His repetitions, too, are frequent, and consist not only of repeating over and over again the same words and expressions, but in a wearisome recurrence to subjects and illustrations often handled before. The ardour of his patriotism palls upon us at last. His laudations of liberty, and of all things British, become stale from their constant reiteration.

As a poem, *The Castle of Indolence* must take rank equal to, if not higher than *The Seasons*. Though neither in matter nor form so popular as the latter, and though appealing

to a narrower tribunal than his descriptions of natural phenomena and scenery, it is finished with consummate art. Every expression is polished to the uttermost, which, considering that the work occupied the poet fifteen years, is not surprising. The opening scenes are the best, and though not so original as *The Seasons*, being in manner and spirit a close imitation of Spenser, it indubitably ranks high as a poem. The imitation of the *Faëry Queen* is not sustained throughout.

Perhaps the less said of the other works of the poet the better for his reputation. His plays scarcely ever rise above a tame and feeble mediocrity, and are now deservedly forgotten, and almost altogether unread. His other poems—if we except a few pieces and occasional songs—are utterly wearisome. Neither the *Liberty* nor the *Britannia*—which are the longest of them—is at all worthy of the poet of the *Seasons*; and though his friend Lyttelton said he had not written “one line which, dying, he could wish to blot,” his admirers would feel it a small loss were nearly all the minor poems, together with the plays of Thomson, blotted from our literature. Perhaps, however, Lyttelton designed to express by this encomium his high opinion of the moral tone of Thomson’s works; and, in an age in which literature was by no means prudish, this certainly is not the least of many merits. However, it is as the poet of *The Seasons* that James Thomson will ever be remembered in Britain.

EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF THOMSON.

SPRING SHOWERS.

THE north-east spends his rage ; he now shut up
Within his iron cave, th' effusive south
Warms the wide air, and o'er the void of heaven
Breathes the big clouds with vernal showers distant.
At first a dusky wreath they seem to rise,
Scarce staining either ; but, by swift degrees,
In heaps on heaps, the doubling vapour sails
Along the loaded sky, and mingling deep,
Sits on th' horizon round a settled gloom :
Not such as wintry storms on mortals shed,
Oppressing life ; but lovely, gentle, kind,
And full of every hope and every joy,
The wish of nature. Gradual sinks the breeze
Into a perfect calm ; that not a breath
Is heard to quiver through the closing woods,
Or rustling turn the many twinkling leaves
Of aspen tall. Th' uncurling floods, diffused
In glassy breath, seem through delusive lapse
Forgetful of their course. 'Tis silence all,
And pleasing expectation. Herds and flocks
Drop the dry sprig, and mute-imploring eye
The falling verdure. Hush'd in short suspense,
The plummy people streak their wings with oil,
To throw the lucid moisture trickling off ;
And wait the approaching sign to strike, at once,
Into the general choir. Even mountains, vales,
And forests seem, impatient, to demand
The promised sweetness. Man superior walks
Amid the glad creation, musing praise,
And looking lively gratitude. At last,
The clouds consign their treasures to the fields ;
And softly shaking on the dimpled pool
Prelusive drops, let all their moisture flow,
In large effusion, o'er the freshen'd world.
The stealing shower is scarce to patter heard,
By such as wander through the forest walks,
Beneath th' umbrageous multitude of leaves.
But who can hold the shade while heaven descends
In universal bounty, shedding herbs,
And fruits, and flowers on Nature's ample lap !
Swift fancy fired anticipates their growth ;
And, while the milky nutriment distils,
Beholds the kiudling country colour round.

REFLECTIONS SUGGESTED BY WINTER.

'Tis done! dread winter spreads its latest glooms,
 And reigns tremendous o'er the conquer'd year.
 How dead the vegetable kingdom lies!
 How dumb the tuneful! Horror wide extends
 His desolate domain. Behold, fond man!
 See here thy pictured life: pass some few years,
 Thy flowering spring, thy summer's ardent strength,
 And pale concluding winter comes at last,
 Thy sober autumn fading into age,
 And shuts the scene. Ah! whither now are fled
 Those dreams of greatness? those unsolid hopes
 Of happiness? those longings after fame?
 Those restless cares? those busy bustling days?
 Those gay-spent festive nights? those veering thoughts,
 Lost between good and ill, that shared thy life?
 All now are vanish'd! Virtue sole survives,
 Immortal never-failing friend of man,
 His guide to happiness on high. And see!
 'Tis come, the glorious morn! the second birth
 Of heaven and earth! awakening nature hears
 The new-creating word, and starts to life,
 In every heighten'd form, from pain and death
 For ever free. The great eternal scheme,
 Involving all, and in a perfect whole
 Uniting, as the prospect wider spreads
 To reason's eye refined clears up apace.
 Ye vainly wise! ye blind presumptuous! now,
 Confounded in the dust, adore that Power
 And Wisdom oft arraign'd: see now the cause,
 Why unassuming worth in secret lived,
 And died neglected: why the good man's share
 In life was gall and bitterness of soul:
 Why the lone widow and her orphans pined
 In starving solitude: while luxury,
 In palaces, lay straining her low thought,
 To form unreal wants: why heaven-born truth,
 And moderation fair, wore the red marks
 Of superstition's scourge: why licensed pain,
 That cruel spoiler, that embosom'd foe,
 Embitter'd all our bliss. / Ye good distress'd!
 Ye noble few, who here unbending stand
 Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up awhile,
 And what your bounded view, which only saw
 A little part, deem'd evil is no more!
 The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
 And one unbounded spring encircle all.

SCENE BETWEEN MAY AND JUNE.

IN lowly dale, fast by a river's side,
 With woody hill o'er hill encompass'd round,
 A most enchanting wizzard did abide,
 Than whom a fiend more fell is nowhere found.
 It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground ;
 And there a season atween June and May,
 Half pranked with spring, with summer half imbrown'd,
 A listless climate made, where, sooth to say,
 No living wight could work, ne carèd e'en for play.

Was nought around but images of rest,
 Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between,
 And flowery beds, that slumbrous influence kest
 From poppies breathed, and beds of pleasant green,
 Where never yet was creeping creature seen.
 Meantime unnumber'd glittering streamlets play'd,
 And hurl'd everywhere their water's sheen,
 That, as they bicker'd through the sunny glade,
 Though restless still themselves, a lulling murmur made.

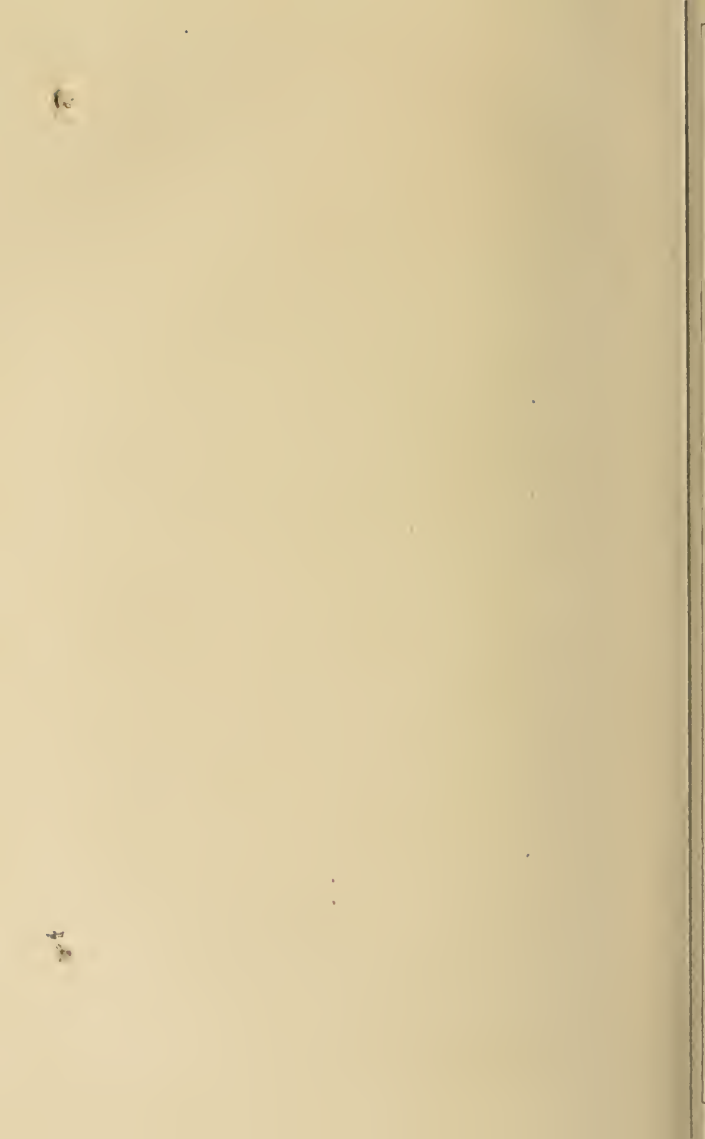
Join'd to the prattle of the purling rills,
 Were heard the lowing herds along the vale,
 And flocks loud bleating from the distant hills,
 And vacant shepherds piping in the dale :
 And now and then sweet Philomel would wail,
 Or stock-doves plain amid the forest deep,
 That drowsy rustled to the sighing gale ;
 And still a coil the grasshopper did keep ;
 Yet all these sounds y-blent inclinèd all to sleep.

Full in the passage of the vale above,
 A sable, silent, solemn, forest stood,
 Where nought but shadowy forms were seen to move,
 As Idless fancied in her dreaming mood ;
 And up the hills, on either side, a wood
 Of blackening pines, aye waving to and fro,
 Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood ;
 And where this valley winded out, below,
 The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow.

A pleasing land of drowsy-head it was,
 Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,
 And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
 For ever flushing round a summer sky ;
 There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
 Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
 And the calm pleasures, always hover'd nigh ;
 But whate'er smack'd of noyace or unrest,
 Was far, far off expell'd from this delicious nest.



Was nought around but images of rest,
 Sleep-soothing groves, and quiet lawns between,
 And flowery beds, that sumbrous nest
 From poppies breathed, and beds of pleasant green,
 Where never yet was creeping creature seen.



THE STUDY AND BEAUTIES OF THE WORKS OF NATURE

O NATURE! all-sufficient! over all!
 Enrich me with the knowledge of Thy works!
 Snatch me to heaven; Thy rolling wonders there,
 World beyond world, in infinite extent,
 Profusely scatter'd o'er the void immense,
 Show me; their motions, periods, and their laws,
 Give me to scan; through the disclosing deep
 Light my blind way; the mineral strata there;
 Thrust, blooming, thence the vegetable world;
 O'er that the rising system more complex,
 Of animals; and higher still, the mind,
 The varied scene of quick-compounded thought,
 And where the mixing passions endless shift;
 These ever open to my ravish'd eye;
 A search, the flight of time can ne'er exhaust!
 But if to that unequal; if the blood,
 In sluggish streams about my heart, forbid
 That best ambition; under closing shades,
 Inglorious, lay me by the lowly brook,
 And whisper to my dreams. From Thee begin,
 Dwell all on Thee, with Thee conclude my song;
 And let me never, never stray from Thee!

PEACE.

OH! first of human blessings! and supreme!
 Fair peace! how lovely, how delightful thou!
 By whose wide tie the kindred sons of men
 Like brothers live, in amity combined,
 And unsuspecting faith; while honest toil
 Gives every joy, and to those joys a right,
 Which idle, barbarous rapine but usurps.
 Pure is thy reign; when, unaccurs'd by blood,
 Nought, save the sweetness of indulgent showers,
 Trickling distils into the verdant glebe;
 Instead of mangled carcasses, sad-seen,
 When the blithe sheaves lie scatter'd o'er the field;
 When only shining shares, the crooked knife
 And hooks, imprint the vegetable wound;
 When the land blushes with the rose alone,
 The falling fruitage, and the bleeding vine.
 O Peace! thou source and soul of social life;
 Beneath whose calm inspiring influence,
 Science his views enlarges, Art refines,
 And swelling Commerce opens all her ports;
 Blest be the man divine, who gives us thee!
 Who bids the trumpet hush his horrid clang,
 Nor blow the giddy nations into rage;

Who sheaths the murderous blade ; the deadly gun
Into the well-piled armory returns ;
And every vigour, from the work of death,
To grateful industry converting, makes
The country flourish, and the city smile,
Unviolated, him the virgin sings ;
And him the smiling mother to her train.
Of him, the shepherd, in the peaceful dale,
Chants ; and the treasures of his labour sure,
The husbandman of him, as at the plough,
Or team, he toils. With him the sailor soothes,
Beneath the trembling moon, the midnight wave ;
And the full city, warm, from street to street,
And shop to shop, responsive, ring of him.
Nor joys one land alone ; his praise extends
Far as the sun rolls the diffusive day ;
Far as the breeze can bear the gifts of peace,
Till all the happy nations catch the song.

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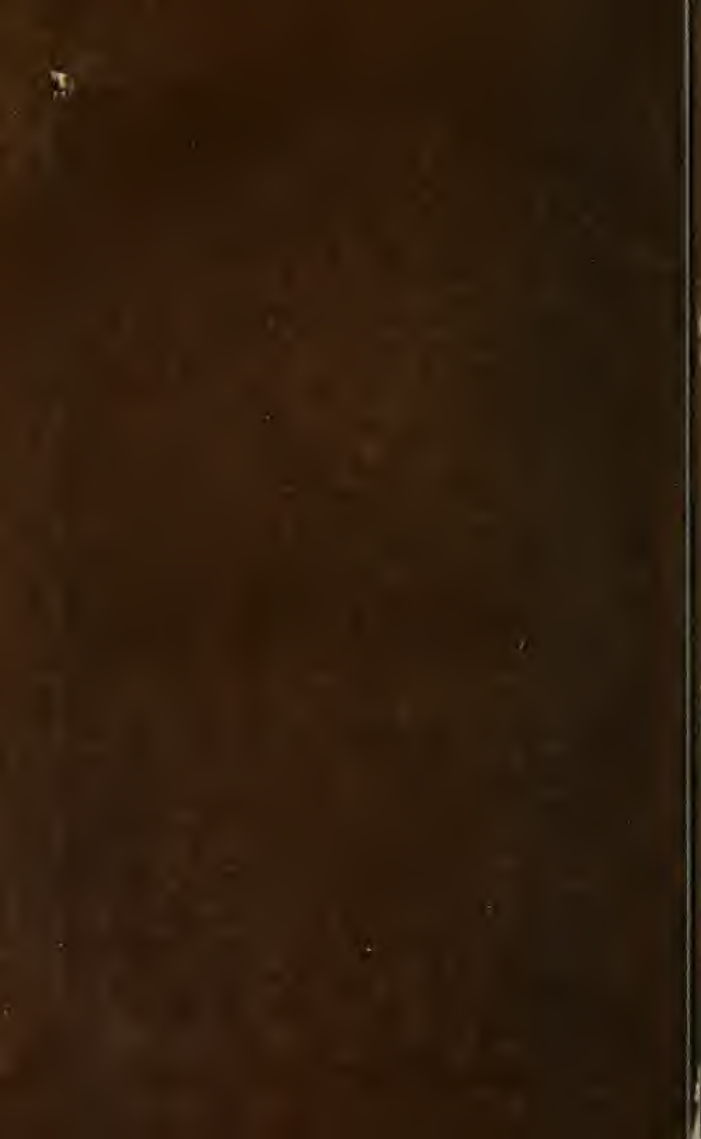
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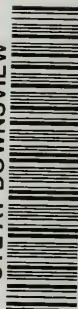
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